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The Integrative Transformation: Patterns of Sociopolitical Organization in Southern Syria

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In a series of articles concerning the nature of ideology in the modern Third World nations, Clifford Geertz (1973: 193-341) described the transformation of these former colonial regimes into highly self-conscious countries as the "integrative revolution." Used perhaps in a more metaphorical sense than the way in which archaeologists at one time viewed the agricultural and urban "revolutions," Geertz's integrative revolution was highlighted by one developmental tendency: "the aggregation of independently defined, specifically outlined traditional primordial groups into larger, more diffuse units whose implicit frame of reference is not the local scene but the 'nation' . . ." (1973: 306-7). My intention here is not to contribute to the already vast literature on this modern development, but instead to draw attention to closely analogous processes in more ancient times and to seek ways in which to understand their roles in historical change. This is not to say that the emergence of large supra-local polities—territorial states—in early times necessarily resulted in centralized political units that conceived of themselves as "nations" (although some may have done so), but that the process involved in their formation—the aggregation of small local groups into larger territorial units—was markedly similar to the modern one. To name but one example, the spasms undergone by some modern nations in their frenzied search for self-identity certainly bear more than a superficial resemblance to the internal convulsions that wrenched the early Hebrew monarchy in the first millennium B.C., after the dominance of the Bronze Age city as the principal political form on the social landscape had come to an end. In a very real sense, this early replacement of the primordial sentiments of the past with new civic ties to the state was the beginning of a new sociopolitical structure, the territorial national state.

Considering the burgeoning number of studies by anthropologists, sociologists, and historians concerning the formation and nature of ancient Near Eastern states (e.g., Adams 1966; Buccellati 1967; Carneiro 1970; Eisenstadt 1963; Johnson 1973; Trigger 1968; Weber 1976; Wittfogel 1957; Parsons 1977), why draw an analogy from so remote a "future?" We may do so partly because the recent past is more accessible to inquiry, and its rich details are more illustrative of the complexities at work in the aggregative process of state formation (e.g., Morris 1974). But another reason is that many studies have emphasized, in varying degrees, what Fallers (1974) has called the "macrocosmic" treatment at the expense of a "microcosmic" perspective, and thus they have tended to view sociopolitical structures from the apex down and from the center outward. Geertz's work, while perhaps not a prescription for the analysis of ancient societies, nevertheless redresses this imbalance by stressing the role of the "independently defined, specifically outlined traditional primordial groups." He thereby reminds us of their disjunctive relationships with the centralizing tendencies and expansive ambitions of political centers. In other words, in both modern and ancient societies the processes of political centralization and fragmentation entail, by definition, the agglomeration or dispersal of smaller units which are somehow outlined and defined. In any study of sociopolitical changes, therefore, these Janus-like configurations of small local units—some of which are today lumped together under such rubrics as "pluralism," "regionalism," or "ethnic blocs"—clearly demand closer scrutiny. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to question

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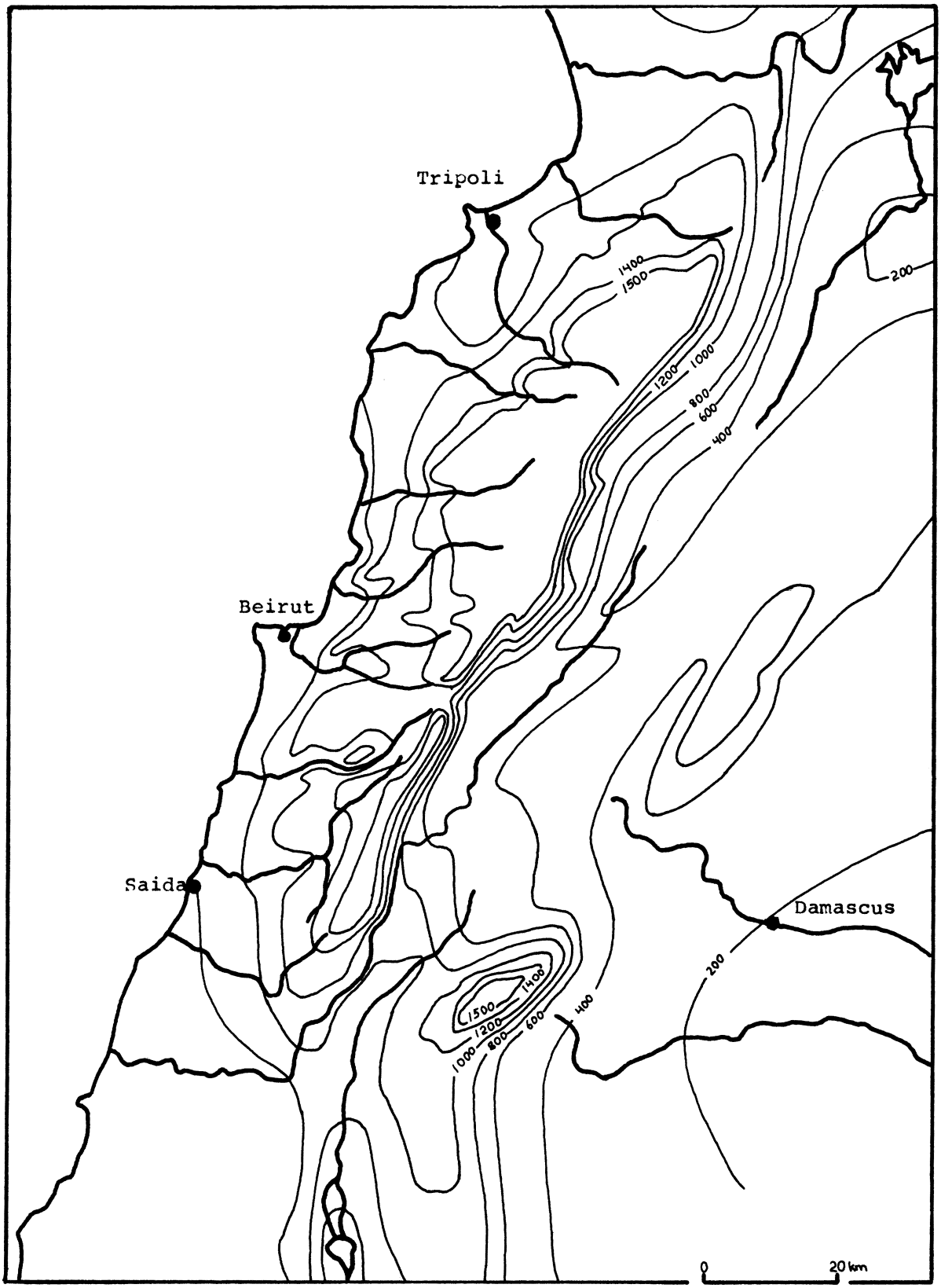

Fig. 1. Mean Annual Precipitation in Lebanon.

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the ways in which we have reconstructed social landscapes in the past and to reexamine these past reconstructions by drawing attention to the role of small-scale social groups in the processes of sociopolitical change in southern Syria.

In the sense that the lines of cleavage between local groups tend to interweave with each other, the investigation of these multifaceted primordial groups would appear to be inalterably blurred by a confused mass of detail. Group alignments are frequently classified by a diverse assortment of real or presumed kinship ties, by racial or linguistic groups, by sectarian or regional affiliations, or simply by "local customs." But as these may in fact stem from a range of political, psychological, cultural, or ecological factors, this seemingly hopeless entanglement of "primordial ties" would appear to be virtually impossible to follow, particularly for the ancient Near East. Some of these superfluous strands can be bypassed, however, if societies and social history are viewed in the three-level historical perspective exemplified in the works of Braudel (1972) and Bloch (1973). This view argues that beneath the rapid tempo of an essentially superficial history of events and of a slower-moving but nevertheless dynamic history of social groupings and their interaction, there lies an agonizingly slow yet far-reaching historical "undercurrent," within which the higher levels are deeply rooted and must be measured in millennia. Thus, even if we cannot at present fully penetrate the Gordian tangle of sociocultural factors so deeply embedded in Braudel's second level, a beginning can at least be made by tracing the lines of social cleavage from their origin, i.e., from a goegraphical history both remote from and less perceptible than the events recorded in the literary evidence. Consequently, this paper is concerned with the ecological relationships that patterned sociopolitical behavior in southern Syria, as well as with the resulting lines of cleavage between social groups that limited or facilitated the extension of centralized power.

The programmatic nature of these objectives pertains more to *how* social landscapes are reconstructed than to any actual reconstructions proposed. My intention is not to provide answers to questions, but to plead for new perspectives and to suggest further lines of inquiry. Toward these ends I wish to take a specific regional situation, to place it in a broader setting of time and place, and to draw from this discussion a wider pattern of historical continuity and change, within which a series of apparently isolated historical events may be seen to have a place. Such conclusions of fact and method as I may draw are of course hardly to be sustained by a single region. For this reason, the history that I deal with is construed not in the style of a tightly documented political chronicle, but history more in the manner of the discursive generalizing approach advocated by Finley (1975). To stretch, if not to distort, an explicitly Geertzian concept (1973: 3-30), I have aimed, where detailed descriptions of historical situations are necessary, not at a "thin" description of presumably objective facts (for, as Carr has noted, an "element of interpretation enters into every fact of history"; 1961: 11) but at a "thick" description of a history that "is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (1961: 35).

Microenvironments and the Moral Economy

For the specific regional situation we shall choose Lebanon in recent times, particularly the valley enclosed by the Lebanon and Antilebanon mountain ranges, the Biqa^{c}. Here the tremendous topographical contrasts and environmental diversities that characterize the region, together with the patterning of demography, subsistence, and social groupings, can be summarized in a word: fragmentation.[1] The longitudinal axis of the valley plain is traversed by an environmental gradient that ranges from humid Mediterranean conditions in the south to an intrusion of the semiarid steppe barely 50 km away in the north. From west to east, too, the flanking mountain systems have created both a rainshadow and a series of vertical zones which are defined by altitude and landforms. The Biqa^{c} is consequently a vast mosaic of small, diverse, and localized microenvironments, where wide variations coexist. Within this mosaic there can be defined a number of principal resource habitats, each gently merging with its neighbors, yet clearly distinguished by its patterning of subsistence strategies and local population groups: alluvial fans, upper and lower colluvial-alluvial terraces, floodplains, karstic spring oases, marsh depressions, perennial and ephemeral piedmont wadis, rocky piedmont slopes, intermontane valleys and karst depressions, and upland plateaus.

Thus the Biqa^{c} is a river valley formed by a number of small catchment areas draining into

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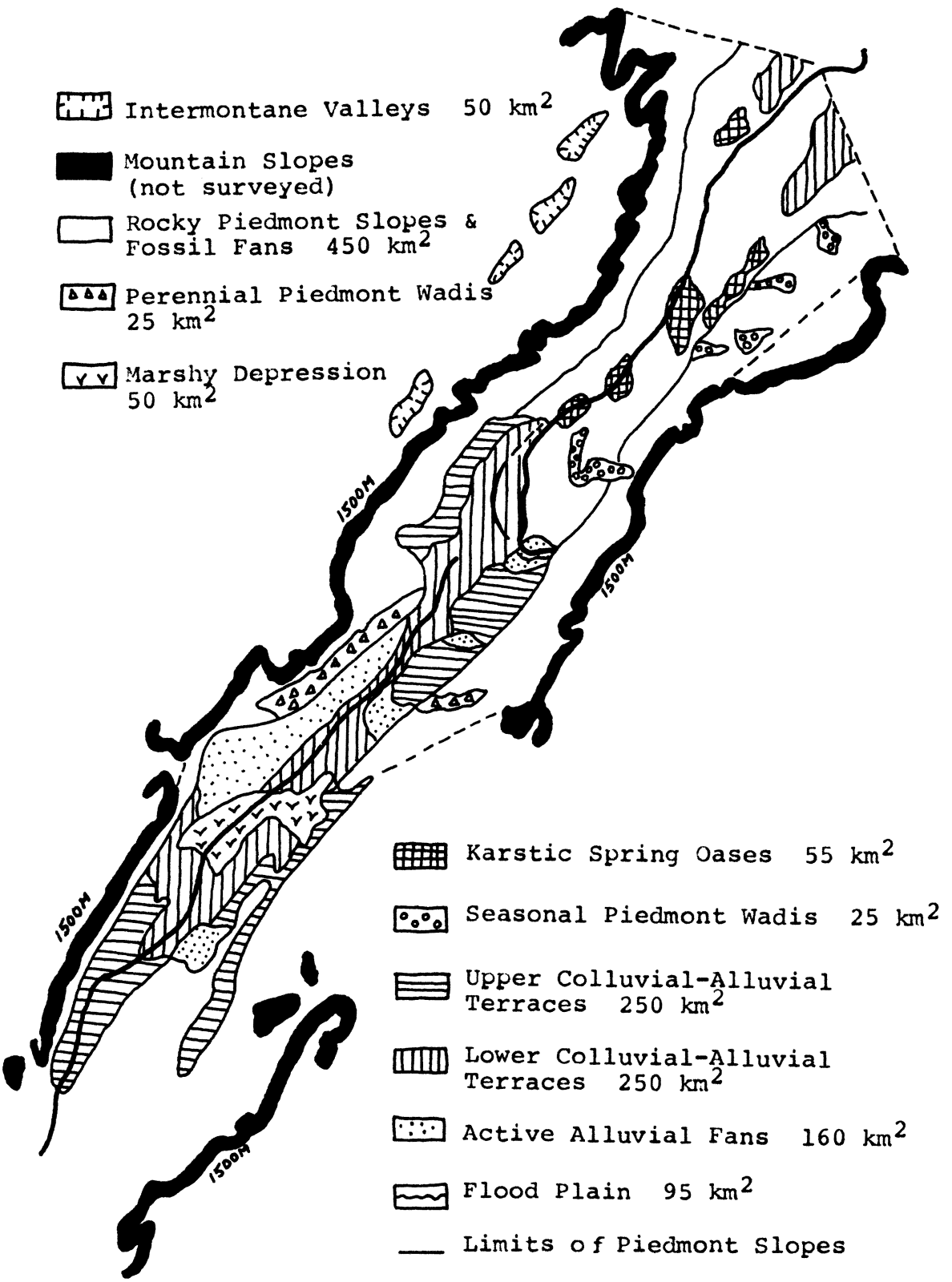

Fig. 2. Principal Microenvironments in the Biqa[c] Valley.

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tributary streams and wadis that in turn flow into the two main axial channels of the Orontes and Litani. These features are significant, however, only where small-scale irrigation is feasible. It is precisely because such opportunities are limited—the result of low stream discharge, unsuitable channel gradients, and seasonal fluctuations—that land use never relied upon these autonomous drainage basins. Settlement history in the valley, unlike that of the great floodplain civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, was oriented less toward irrigation agriculture than toward diverse localized adaptations. Subsistence strategies took the form of highland terrace agriculture, swamp drainage and cultivation, spring irrigation and orchard cultivation, lowland cereal dryfarming, vertical nomadism, and horizontal steppe pastoralism. In any given environment these strategies alternated seasonally between a variety of population groups; but in any given settlement these strategies combined into myriad diverse patterns by a single population group. In other words, the lack of unifying ecological features resulted in a wide spectrum of complementary and supplementary subsistence niches involving numerous permutations of synchronized seasonal and spatial patterns of exploitation. This spectrum spanned the extremes from extensive long range horizontal camel nomadism to intensive irrigated orchard cultivation and urban specializations remote from direct exploitation of land.

Inherent to this fragmented landscape, where microenvironments capable of supporting intensive land use were isolated from other such "pockets" of greater agricultural potential by intervening stretches of less attractive dryfarmed land and natural pastures, was a farming system that was extensive but fraught with risks. The village lands formed a series of concentric circles around irrigated plots, each widening ring representing successive tracts of diminishing agricultural productivity, with an increasing and omnipresent threat of highly variable and unpredictable yields. Today, with a population perhaps ten times greater than that of the Bronze Age, only one-third of the land is cultivated, and even with the introduction of modern dams, bore-holes, pumps, and other land improvement devices only one-quarter of this is irrigated. Even these statistics obscure the tremendous diversities occurring from zone to zone, where cultivated land can vary from 17 to 55% of the surface area, and irrigated land between 1 and 30% of that figure.[2] Because of the low efficiency and high costs of irrigation, it is confined to the production of more lucrative cash crops. Elsewhere dry farming predominates, concentrating on subsistence crops such as cereals and legumes, even though this is riskier. With dryfarming, yields fluctuate considerably from year to year, due to annual shifts in rainfall distribution and also to the practice of allowing some lands to lie fallow. In addition to the periodic natural hazards of drought, torrential floods, or minor changes in local conditions, such perennial impediments to agriculture as high carbonate horizons, soil abuse, competing weeds, swamp parasites, high wind erosion, and meager spring rains further combine to make dryfarming a risky and now profitless venture. In most areas, for example, the return on cereal crops is now substantially below the costs of production, and in fact the average incomes of some farmers are as low as one-third of those earned by the local bedouin.[3]

When such economic insecurities in subsistence are compounded by an inflexible system of land tenure and taxation, dryfarming systems are marked by an extremely precarious stability that includes even the most "fertile" pockets. Near Baalbek, for instance, seven per cent of the owners hold almost two-thirds of the cultivated area, indicating that a large proportion of farmers are actually sharecroppers, tenants, or wage laborers (Gauthier and Baz 1960: vol. 1, 132). Yet, with the cultivated area per capita averaging only slightly more than 0.5 hectare, and with mean yields of as little as 300 kg per hectare in some localities, the returns on a cereal crop fall below subsistence level in some years (Marfoe 1978: 117; Gauthier and Baz 1960: vol. 2, 65). Thus many farmers are incapable of paying fixed rents and taxes, much less investing in more profitable cash crops or in more reliable production schemes. Indeed, there is very little incentive for tenant farmers to risk cash surpluses in land even if these surpluses were available. On the other hand, the sources of credit and investment—the landowners in particular—are unlikely to invest in land unless there exists profit motive (e.g., irrigated cash crops).

To a great extent these conclusions explain the peasant outlook toward village farming, as a recent sociological survey of the valley reflects (Fetter 1961). In this survey it was observed that: (1) small farmers preferred to be sharecroppers or tenants because risks were either shared or

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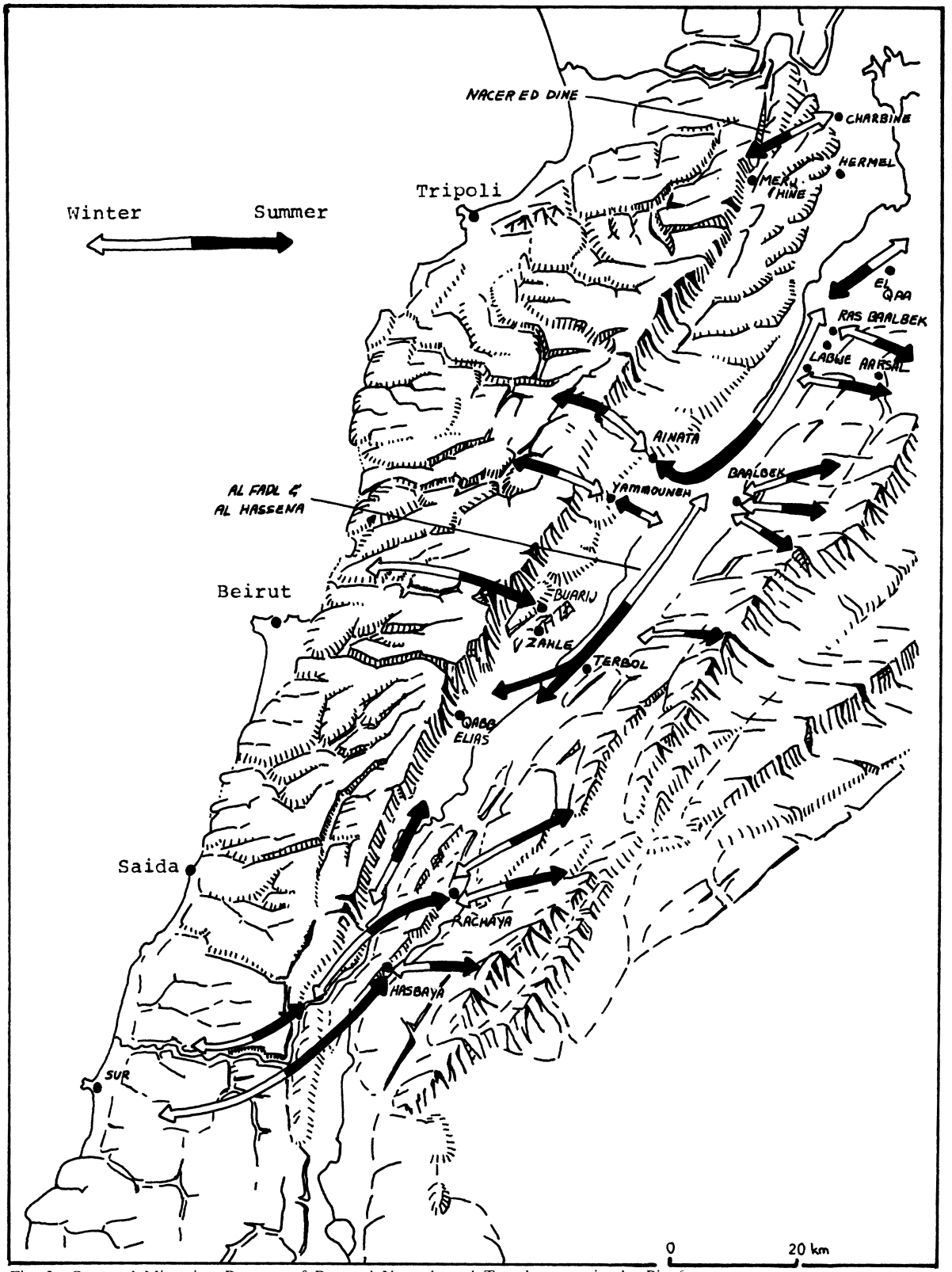

Fig. 3. Seasonal Migration Patterns of Pastoral Nomads and Transhuments in the Biqa[c].

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absorbed by the landowner; (2) investment schemes for land improvement were viewed with caution and suspicion by small farmers; and (3) widespread dissatisfaction with the government was especially focussed on its failure to make loans, particularly as a supplier of seeds. In short, subsistence farmers perceived landowners and the government as sources of credit more than anything else. And the failure of these institutions to act in a manner expected by the peasant farmers has led to dissent with the government and the landowners and a general dissatisfaction with villge life. This can be seen in other statistics from the survey: (1) 87% of the small farmers expressed a negative attitude toward village life; (2) 80% blamed this on poor natural conditions and economic factors; (3) 90% felt that there was no future for the young; and (4) 70% thought that conditions were becoming worse.

With subsistence farming as insecure as it is, and with attitudes toward the "authorities" as negative as they are, only two avenues of escape are available to the peasant today. The most popular route (but only in recent times) has been emigration to Beirut or overseas. The latter has been particularly attractive because remittances from overseas provide the only cash surpluses available to the remaining relatives in the villages. Indeed, since cash remittances amount to over 40% of the national export income, and since many villages have sent more than double their remaining population overseas, entire communities have survived economic hardships because of the highly elastic kinship ties that permit spatially scattered family units to remain cohesive (Williams and Williams 1965). In this regard, the village of Haouch el Harimi in the southern Biqa^{c} is an example worthy of note:

> At the time of our first field trip, the spread of houses into the village peripheries, the accelerating pace of emigration, the already increasing contacts between village and urban centers, . . . all seemed to us to presage a break-up of the patrilineal extended family and lineage. Now, after a fourteen-year interval, it is apparent that the extended family and lineage have remained functionally intact. What struck us upon our return . . . is that the changes that have come to Haouch have largely been brought about by those families who have acted as particularly well-integrated and cohesive units. . . . The Haouch extended family, while often widely scattered in residence, remains functionally intact and integrated. Its very level of integration seems to be a prime factor in making changes possible. In turn, change has enhanced extended family cohesion, reinforced and preserved the lineage structure, at times at the expense of nuclear units (Williams and Williams 1965: 61, 64).

A second recourse has been a greater shift toward two competing alternatives: cash cropping and sheep/goat husbandry. Since the former is limited largely to major landowners (and their tenants) who are willing and able to undertake the necessary investments and their attendant risks, the latter is actually the only widespread strategy of economic diversification available to subsistence farmers. The significance of pastoralism for subsistence farming economies has been explained by the fact that it is a low-risk method of capital investment which is not only a highly mobile form of "banking" surpluses and "insuring" against crop losses (Vayda, Leeds, and Smith 1961; Flannery 1969), but also a convenient method of tax evasion. Consequently, the highest herd densities in the Biqa^{c} are to be found in the poorest and most risk-laden microenvironments (Salame 1955; Thoumin 1936: 150-57). But since even the most intensively cultivated areas will frequently sustain a small herd of goats, very large herd sizes can be found in the microenvironments where cereal dryfarming and catch-crop cultivation are the principal agricultural activities. Therefore, rural communities increasingly rely on a wide continuum of pastoralism, from the small herds in the intensively cultivated "pockets" to the widespread practise of vertical nomadism on the piedmont and northern steppe zone (Marfoe 1978: 128-33).

Among these communities practising pastoral strategies, the elastic nature of community ties is again exhibited in the ability of these groups to coalesce into tightly knit sedentary village units or fragment into loosely organized nomadic social segments. At Charbine, for instance, the Nacer ed-Dine, who were once sedentary cash crop farmers on the coast barely 150 years ago, now practise vertical nomadism in dispersed, relatively "egalitarian" units (Salame 1957). At Yammouneh, where vertical nomads began to settle about 150 years ago, minor transhumance is combined with intensive cash cropping (Haddad 1968). That this is an ongoing process is indicated by a number of clues: at Charbine communal land tenure is stabilizing into private holdings, while at Yammouneh small private plots are rapidly being concentrated into larger holdings. In the central Biqa^{c}, the Al Fadl and Al Hassena bedouins, at one time classic camel nomads, are now purchas-

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ing land because of their increasing wealth (Chatty 1975: 152, 164-65, 238).

It is unnecessary to amplify this somewhat truncated and simplified account with further examples; what is important is that in comparison with other lowland dryfarming communities many of these villages with broadly based economies have enjoyed a low rate of emigration and a high degree of economic solvency. It should be noted, however, that the system is not in a dynamic equilibrium but is inherently unstable. Although pastoralism plays a complementary role with dryfarming and even irrigated multicropping in the valley, it competes with orchard or irrigated garden cash crops. The polarization of the local economy toward either extreme has now in fact led to the disruption of the tightly synchronized but fragile balance in traditional patterns of exploitation. One result of this is the expansion of agriculture to the point where it has reduced the area of pasturage available, at the same time that herds are expanding.

The outlines of the preceding argument can be summarized briefly. The Biqa^{c} is one of those regions in the Levant which generally have been described as "fertile," and insofar as this is defined by rainfall averages it is in part true. At least three-quarters of the valley lies within the limits of rainfall farming, and in fact some parts receive as much as 1440 mm per year. But this scarcely explains the tremendous diversity in land use practised there. In reality, the landscape is fragmented into numerous microenvironments where the main concerns of the subsistence farmer are the perennial uncertainites and economic risks of agricultural life. It is this threat that has largely governed what has been called the "moral economy" or the "subsistence ethic" of the peasant farmer: his attitudes toward economic strategies and toward the urban elite; his seemingly irrational choices; and, to a great extent, his cultural and social values (Scott 1976). Stated simply, the overwhelming concern of the peasant farmer is not the "normal" motive of maximizing his profit, but the desire to avoid risks and to maintain the security of his subsistence. Economically, his choices have been to diversify his subsistence base by practising a mix of strategies, combining both agriculture and pastoralism; to shift toward one strategy or the other as necessary; and to aviod investments on his own and instead to regard the urban elite as the source of credit. His response to the political economy reduces to his conceptions of "just" and "oppressive" taxation and rents; and this is conditioned not so much by the absolute amounts taken in revenue as it is by the margin left from a highly fluctuating yield.

Although agriculturally based communities have usually seemed economically unstable, as social groups they have been far more resilient against economic pressure than has been commonly thought. Beyond the more recent phenomenon of overseas emigration and its resulting cash remittances, the highly elastic nature of local social groups has been demonstrated by their traditional ability to swing back and forth between intensive and extensive forms of land use. As was amply illustrated during the 1955-60 drought, when entire communities simply abandoned their villages (IRFED 1959-60), local groups are characterized by both a social cohesiveness and a flexibility that transcends fixed socioeconomic roles or identification by residential permanence.

It would be tempting to say that farmers became nomads, plainsmen became mountaineers, peasants became townsmen, transhumanists became nomads, and so on. But as Leach (1964: 285) has observed of such theoretical models, ". . . we can no longer be satisfied with attempting to set up a typoloy of fixed systems . . . the fictional nature of this equilibrium should be frankly recognized." The boundaries between the categories have been such that an equilibrium among these ideal groups has existed rarely, if ever. No single village has ever been solely dependent on agriculture, and even when cultivation did form the principal subsistence base, the dynamic nature of the socioeconomic equilibrium was to some extent reflected in the changes from communal to private, and from fragmented to concentrated, land holdings. Socioeconomic categories therefore retain meaning only because a description of these shifting roles would otherwise be a hopeless task. Once we are freed from the notion of residential definition of social groups, the history of settlement and land use in the Biqa^{c} can be seen to be no more than a record of this fluidity, i.e., of periodic shifts along a spectrum of available economic strategies and sociocultural roles. The constant interchangeability of identities resulted in a continuous demographic flux across the entire region—regardless of rainfall distributions—that is still reflected in population trends today.

The above sketch of the relationships between

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environment, subsistence, and social cohesiveness is admittedly drawn from a specific case that accentuates the sort of fragmentation and diversity that may obtain in other regions. Yet I would contend that these regional variations exist more in degree than in kind. What ecological features the Biqaᶜ might highlight, other regions would probably render in more subtle tones, but the features are nevertheless there. Ethnographic data from the Hatay in north Syria (Aswad 1971), Tell Toqaan in central Syria (Sweet 1960), the "Israeli Triangle" in Palestine (Cohen 1965), Kufr al-Ma in Jordan (Antoun 1972), and the Shiᶜite and Druze communities of Lebanon (Salibi 1965: xvii) all suggest that flexibility in sociocultural identification, with its accompanying demographic fluidity, exists in varying degrees throughout the Levant.

The implications of this argument for the past obviously depend on whether the ecological relationships today also held in antiquity. Assuming that environmental conditions have remained more or less constant in historical times, the shifting roles between farmer and pastoralist (to take but one example) would have been immeasureably easier, more frequent, and more rapid in ancient times. Compared with the small proportions of irrigated and cultivated land in the Biqaᶜ today, agricultural use of land in the Bronze Age would have been more extensive and irrigation even less significant. Given the overwhelming dependence on dryfarming, with all its ramifications, neither cash crops nor overseas emigration would have played the role it does today. The sole alternative to an unstable village farming economy would, therefore, have been either flight to the cities, or a shift toward pastoralism. With fewer urban functions and less elaborate urban institutions concentrated in Bronze Age Syro-Palestinian towns, the role of pastoralism as an alternative subsistence base would have been greatly amplified.

The evidence for climatic change in early historical times is still quite rudimentary, but recent studies of textual sources from Mari (Hamlin 1977) and Nuzi (Zaccagnini 1976) indicate that variations in yeilds were not unknown in these areas. For the southern Mesopotamian alluvium, Adams (1974) has persuasively sketched a "frontier" model, essentially elaborated from Owen Lattimore's classic study of the shifting borders of imperial China (1962a; 1962b). Adams observed that the rise and fall of Mesopotamian civilization was marked by a basic socioeconomic instability and demographic fluidity that was rooted in the unpredictable and uncontrollable risks of irrigation agriculture in semiarid environment. On this social landscape of constant disequilibrium, the city—more properly the urban elite and the credit institutions of the city—was less a fixed nodal point than merely one end of the pastoral-urban continuum; and the frontier that existed lay between this focus of economic, ideological, and political power on the one hand, and the rural hinterland on the other. The thrust of Adams's analysis is that the periodic oscillations between phases of political growth and interludes of decline were symptoms of a process wherein the rural hinterlands of the city formed a "reservoir" that was alternately realigned into rural communities of sedentary farmers and tribal segments of pastoral nomads.

Adams's hypothesis, I believe, is perhaps even more meaningful for the Levant than for Mesopotamia. For while the nature of the ancient political economy and the flexibility of ancient social groups are still poorly defined, textual sources such as those from Ugarit and Amarna referring to villages "going over" to the ᶜApiru suggest that sociocultural roles in the past were as fluid as in the recent times. In addition, both the familiar Sinuhe narrative and the Idrimi inscription depict parallel situations in which the protagonists, clearly members of the ruling urban elite, found it apparently a normal recourse to flee to the frontier and associate for considerable lengths of time with groups that their peers would have undoubtedly deemed to be social outcasts. At Mari, where the relationships between the Ḫanaeans and Mari itself are well known, it is striking that a royal official should share a common symbolic act—the ritual slaughter of an ass-foal—with two warring "external" groups, the Ḫanaeans and the Idamaras (ARM II.37; cf. Pritchard 1969: 482-83). Whatever one's interpretation of this action, it suggests that we may be dealing with groups who, although clearly differentiated by an urban scribe, shared at least some aspects of their respective cultural systems, and in Leach's sense of the word, were members of "one society."

The above examples may be amplified by others, but they are sufficient to convey the point: it may well be that the urban elitist perspective of the dichotomy between the desert and the sown, the urban and the uprooted, as depicted in past

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literary sources, was more apparent than real, and much like our present usage, represented only an "ideal" social system with its ideal social types. The categorical labels used by the urban scribe of antiquity for broad "peripheral" or "outcast" social groups (e.g., the early Amorites), the ᶜApiru, and the Shasu) outside the immediate sway of the city or the centralized power put in black and white what in fact may be shades of gray (cf. Greenberg 1955; Giveon 1971).

The significance of the foregoing discussion may be summarized briefly. Basic to our consideration of the problem of political centralization and disintegration is the question of why the civilizations of the ancient Near East fluctuated between growth and decline. We must confront not only the recurring patterns of apparent abandonment and urban domination in Syria-Palestine, but also the alternation of fragmented nomes and unified kingdoms in Egypt, and of the city-states and larger empires in Mesopotamia. The transformation of the Syro-Palestinian social landscape from a patchwork of city-states to larger territorial states, in other words, is part of the larger phenomenon of the rise and fall of Near Eastern civilizations. There is no reason to believe that various regions of the Near East underwent these changes synchronously. Yet the almost cyclical regularity of the patterns strongly suggests a complex process of socioeconomic change that cannot be explained by such facile postualtions as climatic changes or "barbarian" migrations.

I would contend that one of the major stumbling blocks to our understanding of economic and cultural changes is that we have focussed too long on static social reconstructions which emphasize the apex of the social hierarchy at the expense of what happens outside this central power. Thus arguments for culture change have understandably revolved around such *external* phenomena as climatic shifts which may have altered the "fixed" positions of the limits of rainfall farming, conjuring up images of a linear strip of land that neatly allows us to compartmentalize and distinguish the "desert" from the "sown," the "civilized" from the "barbaric," and to visualize nomads and sedentaries sweeping back and forth across this line. Such a lack of differentiation reduces our perception of highly variegated patterns of subsistence and social groupings to simplified ideal types that can be stuffed into tidy pigeonholes: "dimorphic zone and society," "enclosed nomadism," "urban autonomy," and "parasocial elements" (Rowton 1973; 1974; 1976; 1977). Such conceptual models are not necessarily inaccurate, but they are essentially static constructs incapable of explaining change. If the subsistence and social patterns of a localized group are defined less by macroenvironments than by a series of small-scale ecological zones exploited on a complementary basis (i.e., a "niche"; cf. Barth 1956; Coe and Flannery 1964), then entirely new conceptualizations of dynamic social systems which *can* explain sociopolitical changes are needed.

The new lines of investigation that these conceptualizations might open can be illustrated by examples drawn from the same general regional context discussed above, but widely spaced in time. The comparative analysis of these examples should make it possible for us to derive both a sense of the variations in local social groups and a notion of some of the constraints imposed on political integration. More important, the distinguishing of these local units from the centralizing authority that overlaid them may allow us to discern what tied these units to the authority and help us to understand the role of these structures in the process of sociopolitical change. Finally, the development of a "long view" of specific situations—by placing them in a context of long-term historical trends, broader cross-disciplinary approaches, and wider interregional settings—should provide a much-needed perspective. In each case, my descriptive interpretations are based in part on unpublished data, but the bare outlines that I will sketch form, I believe, a framework that is sufficiently suggestive of the form and substance of the sociopolitical structures that we wish to reconstruct.

The Politics of Fragmentation

To consider first the patterns of sociopolitical organization on the lowland plains of the Biqaᶜ, let us begin with a situation in the remote past and then move gradually to a more recent context. In the Bronze Age in the Biqaᶜ, the character of the interaction between sociopolitical structures on the one hand and the ecological relationships and sociocultural systems on the other can be drawn with reasonable clarity through archaeological surveys.[4] With all the caution that must accompany the interpretation of survey results, the settlement patterns and long-term trends that emerge can be roughly divided into three principal stages of

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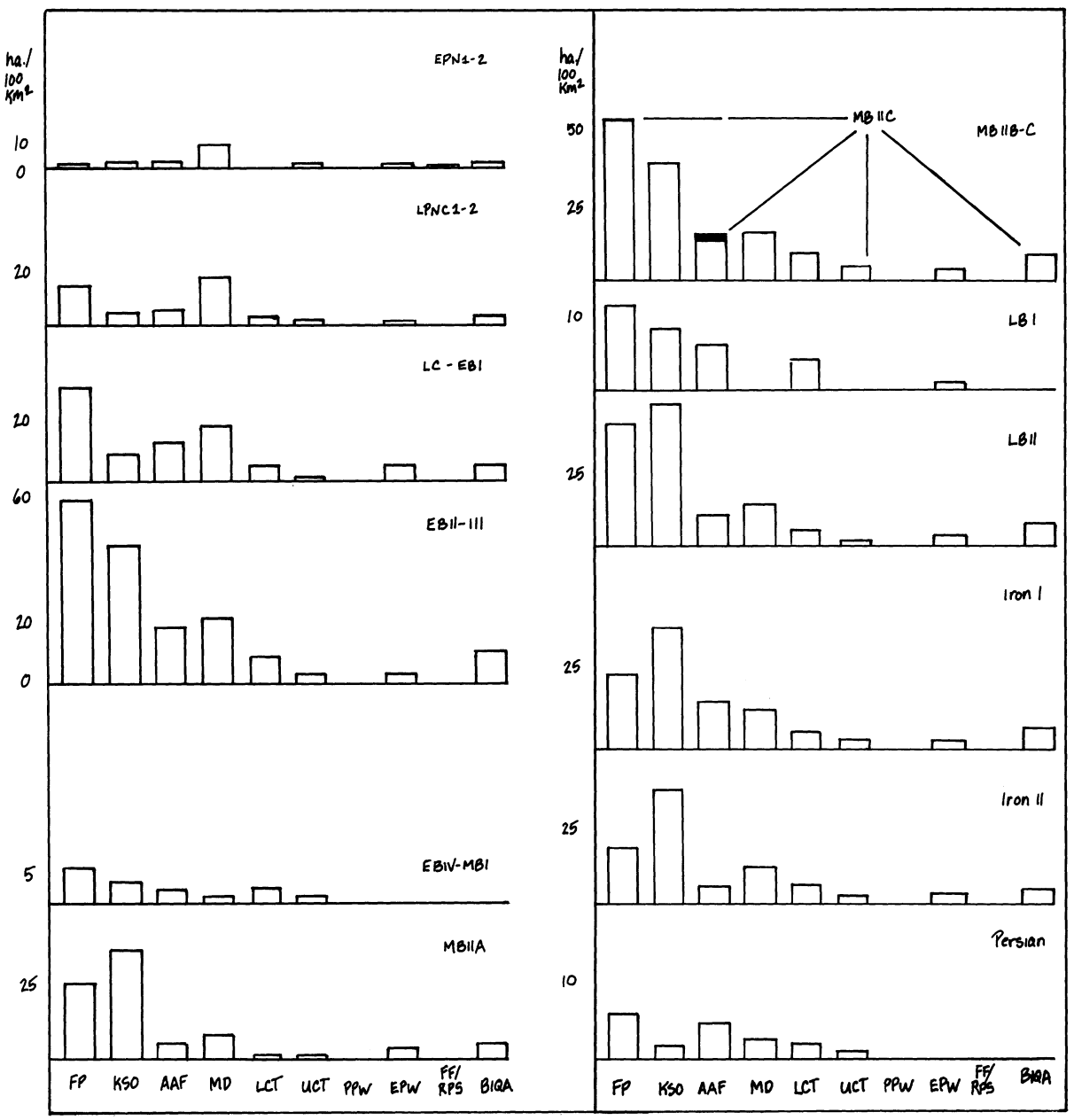

Fig. 4. Settlement Density (in hectares per 100 km^2) within Microenvironments from Early Pottery Neolithic to Iron Age (for a key to the abbreviations, see map, fig. 2).

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transformation. These broad stages, while neglecting minor variations that can be discerned with finer periodization, nevertheless render otherwise subtle trends in sharper contrast and provide a convenient overview of historic developments.

Discounting the first and longest stage, which lasted from the late Upper Paleolithic to the late Chalcolithic and is of little concern here, the Bronze Age patterns of settlement and land use mark the second stage, which began with the emergence of urban settlements around 3000 B.C. For most of this long interval, the piedmont slopes of the valley were still wooded, and settlement was confined to an area of about 800-900 km^2 on the valley floor. Sedentary cultivation, however, probably did not exceed about 600-700 km^2 at any one time, or about one-half of the 1400 km^2 survey area on the valley bottom, and one-sixth of the 4200 km^2 area of the Biqa^c province (on which modern land use statistics are based). Thus, even during periods of maximum settlement, the high proportion of uncultivated to cultivated land indicates that the regional population was never very large. A further characteristic of this second stage of settlement was a series of demographic fluctuations, in which crests of settlement expansion, population growth, and agricultural intensification were truncated by troughs of abandonment, population decline, and probably a shift toward pastoralism. Thus, one may observe throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages in the Biqa^c four major phases of growth and decline reflected in the archaeological record and coeval with the well-known and similar trends in Palestine.[5]

A second pattern discernible during this long stage of settlement was a trend that could be described as rural decline. After the initial expansion of settlement and agriculture in EB II-III, later periods of growth (i.e., MB II, LB II, Iron I) displayed a steady reduction in settled regions, in population, and in the area under cultivation. A detailed exposition of this trend is unnecessary here. Suffice it to say that based on surveys this decline in settlement may be estimated at about 16% between the Early Bronze and the Middle Bronze and about 24% between the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze Ages (Marfoe 1978: 211, 378, 388).[6] An especially significant indication of this decline was the absence of any innovations in land use. In the marshy depressions, for instance, there were no signs of drainage to permit additional lands to come under cultivation after EB II-III. Symptomatic too of this rural decline was the fact that in each succeeding period of settlement the ratio of villages and hamlets to towns and cities gradually diminished, while the proportion of urban settled area to the total settled area increased correspondingly (Marfoe 1978: 401-4). This suggests that as the rural area controlled by a local center contracted, and as the area of cultivation exploited by an urban center was reduced, the productive capacities of each urban center—which were roughly equal to one another in the Early Bronze period—became more disparate from zone to zone by the Late Bronze Age. As a consequence of the abandonment of subsidiary villages and hamlets, the microenvironments exploited by each center through its rural tentacles became less evenly distributed between individual city "territories."

A third pattern was a distinct and regular distribution of settlement within the patchwork of microenvironments (Marfoe 1978: 405-11). In every period, including the phases of decline, settlements were concentrated primarily in two agricultural microenvironments, with large tell sites occupying the floodplains and karstic spring oases. Secondary to these two microenvironments were the alluvial fans and marsh depressions, which were mainly settled during periods of settlement growth by medium-size sites. Because the settlement and farming of these habitats would have required some form of drainage, minor irrigation, scrub clearance, and consequently both capital and labor investments, they were of pivotal importance in any period of expansion. A third category of microenvironments consisted of the colluvial-alluvial terraces, which were undoubtedly dryfarmed lands of dubious reliability. On these large zones, the preferred subsistence strategy was probably always a broadly based, constantly shifting mix of dryfarming and pastoralism, in which the heightened risks of variable yields and periodic failures would have encouraged the investment of surplus capital in more mobile and less vulnerable assets, i.e., livestock. Here the sparse scattering of small sites, and the few and sporadic occupational periods represented on any given site found in these zones, suggest that they were the last to be settled and the first to be abandoned.

In most periods there were at least a dozen urban centers within the valley, almost all located in the fertile "pockets." During the Late Bronze

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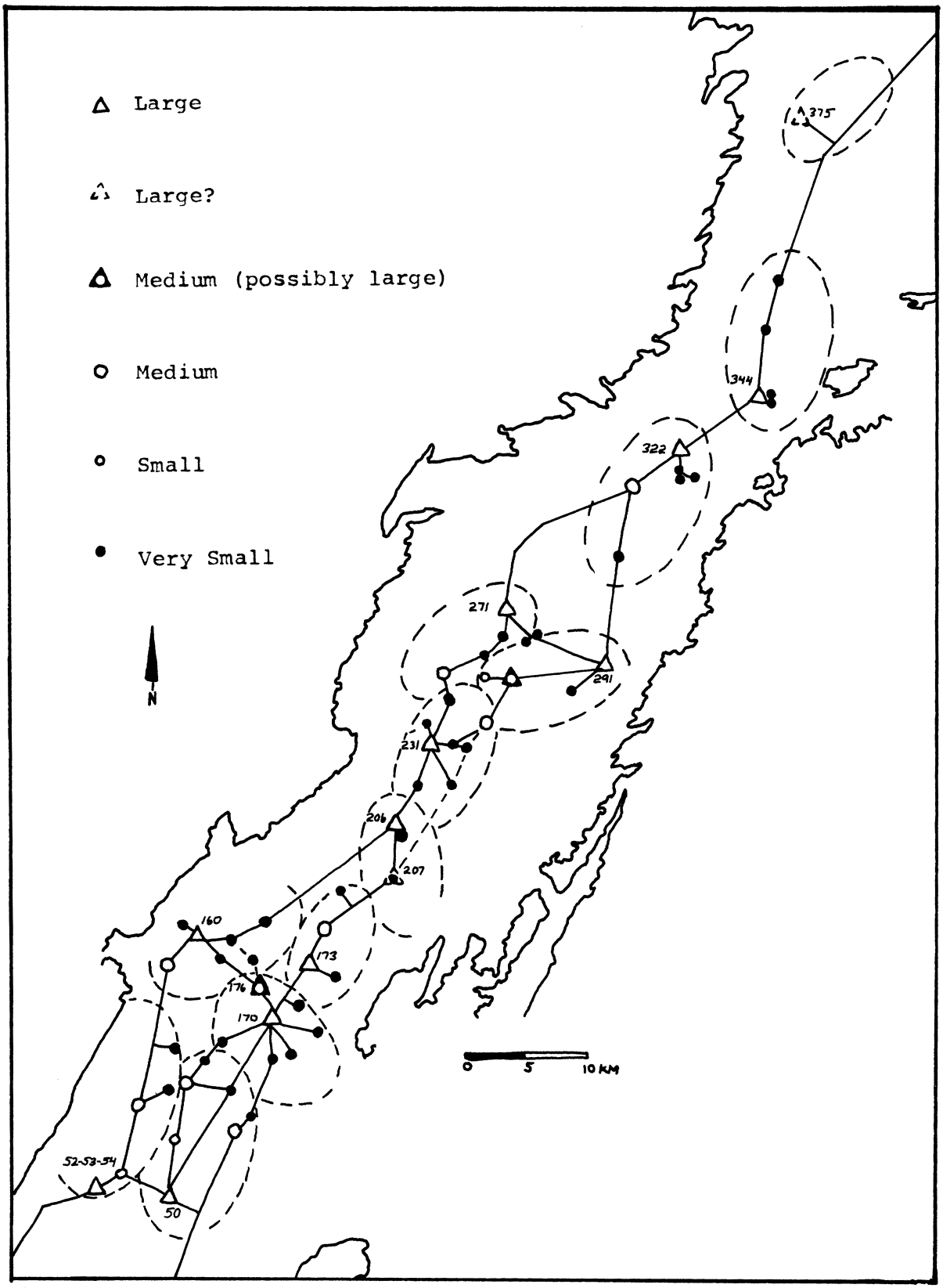

Fig. 5. Reconstructed Settlement Landscape of the Biqaʿ Showing Maximum Extension of Bronze Age Settlement.

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Age, about one-half of these can be identified reasonably with place names in the Amarna letters and other Egyptian documents (Edzard et al. 1970: 63-94; Klengel 1970: 58-70; Kuschke 1958; Marfoe 1978: 473-92; Aharoni 1953; Helck 1971), and there are at least another half dozen toponyms of the period that can be located in the Biqa^{c} with some degree of certainty. It would seem that the region was fragmented into a number of small, virtually autonomous petty kingdoms or "city-states," resulting for the most part in a fairly evenly spaced distribution of city "territories" that averaged about 50 km^2 in area. Distances between major centers varied between 5 and 25 km, but the average (particularly in the center of the valley) was slightly less than 10 km. Consequently, the radius of a city "domain" was generally somewhat less than 5 km, although there was a greater degree of variation during the Late Bronze period.[7] In fact, Late Bronze Age Tell Hashbe and Tell Hizzine, which both can be identified within the same textual contexts (*EA* 174, 175) as Ḫašabu and Ḫazi, are no more than 5 km apart.

If settled area is in any way indicative of relative population size, the countryside that each urban center purported to dominate probably supported a sedentary population no more than double the urban population (Marfoe 1978: 245-46, 407).[8] This population was scattered in about a half dozen villages and hamlets at varying distances from each center, and although differences in settlement importance can be discerned from excavations (as at Tell Ghassil [Baramki 1966] and Tell Taalabaya), this limited number points less to a well-defined hierarchy of sites than to an agglomeration of loosely affiliated satellites.[9] Despite the fact that most smaller sites such as farmsteads have been lost to the archaeological record, the general pattern seems clear.

Outside the immediate limits of the city in its fertile "pocket," farming may have been relatively extensive; but the microenvironments generally settled permitted only limited irrigation, necessitated allowing some land to lie fallow, and required considerable investment and labor to develop. If the few villages and the small area of cultivation are any indication, both capital and labor must have been in relatively short supply, for even the marsh drainage and scrub clearance during EB II-III would have involved hydraulic management on only a minute scale. If such dryfarming conditions existed, the omnipresent subsistence uncertainties would undoubtedly have played a major role in determining economic strategies. Whatever part the city played as a redistributional agent or credit institution in the local economy, there would have been the high degree of demographic fluidity we have already noted. In other words, as far as the city was concerned, if any shortage of resources existed, it lay less in land than in manpower.

Perhaps equally inhibitive to more intensive cultivation was the fact that the territories of these city-states so closely adjoined each other because of the microenvironments they favored. Where urban influences overlapped, conflicts over personnel may have been particularly prominent. To be sure, irrigable lands were probably seldom in question, in the sense that the spacing of springs generally made it clear to which territory they belonged. But the same cannot be said for the better dryfarmed lands: the alluvial fans, the lower colluvial terraces, and the minor tributary streams. Winter pasturage, while more negotiable because of the abundance of uncultivated areas, may have been at a premium in the south. Even for centers that were more distantly spaced, mostly in the karstic spring oases of the north, wider tracts of land did not necessarily mean fewer points of contention. It only meant that for these zones, conflict would arise only where the meager Orontes flow resulted in competition between upstream and downstream areas. Inevitably, however, the small proportion of cultivated land and the low density of population meant that such conflicts would have arisen less over the land itself than over the control of people on those lands. For the farther a village was away from its presumed center, the closer it was to the outlying villages of another center. And when the distances between centers was as little as 5 km, village ties were probably closer to an adjacent village belonging to another center than with either center. Along these mutual "borders"—which in case of densely located urban centers probably encompassed a large part of the territories that each laid claim to—there must have been a constant movement of people back and forth. When intercity conflict arose, then it occurred not so much because the ill-defined borders overlapped, but because the units of production, the people on these "borders," formed a highly mobile population—shifting in subsistence strategies, shifting in loyalties, and shifting through highly permeable sociocultural

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boundaries. It is precisely in just such a context that the numerous occurrences of fugitive clauses in treaties—for example, between Alalakh and Tunip and between Idrimi and Pilliya—can be understood (Wiseman 1953: 26-32).

It is in this context of persistent economic insecurities, nullified authority, and divided loyalties that the otherwise peaceful interaction with nomads would have been intensified. The result was probably that further agricultural efforts were discouraged, a shift toward pastoralism occurred, and bandits and other dissidents increasingly prevailed. This image of an open countryside, where urban authority was attenuated if not nullified, and where the lawless elements of society held sway, is precisely what the documents concerning the ᶜApiru, Ḫabbatu, Sutu, and Shasu convey.[10] In this respect, Buckingham's (1825: 488-89) description of a village in the northern Biqaᶜ during the 19th century may just as well have applied to the Bronze Age city:

> . . . after sunset the cattle and flocks were driven in, and all the village took shelter on the inside of the walls (of the village), . . . the neighbourhood infested by robbers . . . this retirement within a small space is necessary to their security.

With commercial traffic frequently hindered and thus made expensive, with the urban control of rural peoples so precarious, and with border incidents with neighboring rivals provoking reprisals and counter-reprisals, these insecurities would have been self-perpetuating. To complicate matters, the attempt of the cities to protect commercial routes, to control the movements of people, and to insure the inflow of revenue would have contributed to further insecurity through campaigns against neighbors, military incursions into the countryside, the search for fugitives, and relentless taxation. Dissidents in the countryside, themselves in part formed of uprooted peasants, also would have threatened local subsistence farmers, who, beset from either side, might flee toward the shelter of the more inviting urban centers, pursue less vulnerable economic strategies, or participate in less legitimate occupations. This chronic disequilibrium is the very theme of the Amarna letters and other contemporary documents (e.g., *EA* 53, 54, 56, 116, 129, 132, 140, 170, 173-77, 179, 185-87, 191-92, 197-98; Rainey 1970: *EA* 363 for the Biqaᶜ).[11]

To turn now to the urban centers themselves, it would not be too inaccurate to estimate that the largest cities, such as Kamid el-Loz (Kumidi), seldom amounted to much more than a small fortified area of about five hectares.[12] Within this area, a crude round figure of about 1000 persons would be a reasonable estimation of the population, and such a figure would be consistent not only with Webley's calculations for Gezer (1972: 179), but also with the generally very small military forces frequently mentioned in the Amarna letters, or the numbers of prisoners referred to in the Egyptian campaign lists.[13] In at least one case (*EA* 185), however, there are indications that even smaller sites—on the order of about two hectares—may have been autonomous settlements rather than subsidiary villages.[14] However this may be, it is possible that considerable portions of the population residing within the city walls actively participated in agriculture and pastoralism outside the city. Indeed, botanical evidence suggests (e.g., van Zeist 1975) that even the largest Bronze Age towns of the Levant, despite their commercial activities, were engaged in subsistence activities including animal husbandry. At Kamid el-Loz, grapes may have been grown in the fertile "pockets" just outside the city walls, but in the main the proportion of cereals, legumes and fodder crops, and the nature of local microenvironments suggest that the subsistence sector of the economy should not be underestimated (Hachmann 1970: 59-69). Estimates on the size of the urban elite are necessarily speculative, but if the small size of the urban population, and the small numbers of *maryannu* captured on Egyptian campaigns are any indication, this social core was probably quite small and amounted to no more than 10-25% of the total population.[15] In short, the aggregate of the the population, the size of the ruling group, and the prevalence of subsistence activities in the cities all suggest that the elaborate urban institutions of professional guilds, merchant groups, royal retainers, and the like seen at Ugarit (Rainey 1962) and to some extent at Alalakh (Wiseman 1953; Dietrich and Loretz 1964; 1969) were probably absent in these small kingdoms of the Biqaᶜ.

The apparent paradox of a "Byzantium in a five hectare city" is thus resolved, in effect because within the south Syrian cities (except for Hazor) there was simply no room for the sort of state bureaucracy that can be discerned from the large north Syrian and Mesopotamian cities. It may then be conjectured that instead of a multitiered

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hierarchy of rigidly stratified social roles (as at Ugarit), the social organization among the small populations under consideration required that multiple roles be undertaken by a small urban elite group. This group—perhaps all of whom were members of the palace-temple organization which focussed and controlled most, if not all, economic endeavors within the city—would have collectively fused a disparate range of ill-defined identities and functions. Royal lineages, government bureaucracy, priesthood, army, and mercenaries were probably less differentiated than in the larger north Syrian cities. Just as rural groups were probably characterized by a flexibility that defies classification by model social types, so too I would suggest that urban institutions and elites are poorly distinguished by the labels generally associated with "private" and "state" sectors. For example, the mercenary character of the ʿApiru bands in some Amarna letters (cf. Greenberg 1955: 73) should perhaps be evaluated in the light of a persistent shortage of human resources and the lack of a large standing army.

Adequate exposures of Bronze Age levels in excavations to date are rare, but if the limited results from Kamid el-Loz are representative, there is little or no discernible differentiation in the private quarters of the city to indicate social stratification beneath an elite group. The contrast that does exist is between the "monumental" edifices of the palace-temple complex (and other "public" quarters) and the remaining "domestic" quarters.[16] But this contrast is not confined to the architectural tradition; it is illustrated also in the relative poverty of the intramural burials within the domestic quarters (Hachmann 1970: 51-57; Marfoe 1978: 316-20), in the luxury items indulged in by the elite and recorded in cuneiform texts (Wilhelm 1973), and in the wealth indicated by temple deposits or caches of ceremonial significance (Kuschke and Metzger 1972; Metzger 1975).[17] The point, it seems to me, is this: in a impressionistic sense, the social structure of the city was less a hierarchically arranged pyramid of defined status than a polarization between elite and commoner, with both perhaps internally organized by kinship ties. Socially, culturally, and economically, the urban elite—embodied in the conspicuous display and consumption of wealth in the palace-temple complex—stood more at the center than at the apex of a large but for the most part socially undifferentiated population. In this respect, the royal lineages may only have been the largest and wealthiest of a number of smaller and more fragmented kinship groups, whose principal occupations were in subsistence farming. If the foregoing model is applicable, there was a clear-cut social "center"—the urban elite—and a social "periphery"—the remaining urban *and* rural population (cf. Shils 1961).

The above discussion has further implications. For if social cleavages were as postulated, then the distinguishing of local social groups from the urban authority that claimed their allegiance should not only allow us to view that urban authority in a new perspective, it should allow us also to disentangle some of the ties that bound the "periphery" to the "center." The highly dynamic social landscape of the Bronze Age and the fragmentation of petty polities created heated rivalries and internecine warfare between real and would-be sovereigns, each striving to attain supremacy over others. But these "city-states" did not form a patchwork of segmented social pyramids of power that engaged in "foreign relations" across well-defined borders, much less consolidated territorial units of hierarchically tiered villages over which rival centers perpetually competed in border disputes. Neither the "territories" nor the villages of the state were defined by land as much as they were by people. And the social framework that tied these people together may have been in fact relatively uniform kinship groups that solidified into more tightly organized units only within the palace-temple complex. Outside this complex, social distance was relatively undifferentiated, and the scattering of villages oriented toward the city was less an extension of the city than it was of the steppe. The state, in other words, was not "oriental despotism" writ small; nor was it a genuine territorial unit, much less a unified one. It was in effect a network of personal and political ties centered on the palace-temple, where perhaps the king was not merely the last arbiter but possibly the sole arbiter.

On this thinly populated landscape then, the accumulation of political power would have lain not in the conquest and aggregation of land, but in the control of people, and it is over this scarce commodity that conflicts would have arisen between rival states. Thus regional hegemony or political centralization would have amounted to virtually the same thing: the binding of villages or people to the palace-temple and the neutralization

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of a rival pole through capture or destruction. With centers fairly evenly matched—in part because of the microenvironments they favored—the villages would have tended to orient themselves to the nearest urban center. But no center prevailed for long, since consolidation was never a genuine possibility, and ephemeral successes depended on how well a king could mobilize the resources of his domain. Such mobilization would not have relied on the elaboration of the organs of statecraft and a permeative administrative bureaucracy (as it did in larger Mesopotamian states, cf. Yoffee 1977), for the very nature of a small, multiroled elite precluded such an alternative. The dilution of power to a wider body within a limited pool of men would have undermined the same authority that the king wished to retain and uphold. With the limited resources of the south Syrian city, it probably depended more on the threat of military coercion, often by a mercenary force, and in part on the redistributional nature of the palace-temple organization, perhaps the dispensation of rations, land grants, and the like. But in so far as these were all instruments of an administration whose radius of lasting influence was in great part restricted to palace dependents, I would suggest that mobilization depended most of all on the personal qualities of the king, and ultimately on the role of kingship itself as a symbolic ordering of the ideally perceived social order.[18] And kingship in turn would have revolved around the crucial task of legitimization, i.e., the regular reinforcement of the social order through the maintenance of a cult by metaphorical ritual actions. As Idrimi of Alalakh so proudly proclaims (Pritchard 1969: 558):

> . . . As to the cultic regulations which the gods of Alalakh had established, and the sacrifices and offerings which our forefathers had performed for them, I have constantly performed them exactly as they had performed them . . .

It would seem to me that the foregoing hypothesis, as speculative as it may seem, not only reconciles the available textual and archaeological data but also provides a model that can explain change. This reconstruction sketches only the broad outlines of a pattern still poorly understood, but I believe that it argues strongly for the consequences of regional fragmentation and the basic instability of localized polities. On this naturally divisive landscape, the very nature of the political mosaic—of a dynamic system of free-floating, shifting alignments of political poles and their adherents—held the seeds of its decay. It engendered the formation of dissident groups out of an already ambivalent rural "reservoir," and as communities either failed or became alienated from the cities, their social elasticity and economic flexibility fostered the conversion of land capital into more moveable assets, livestock. Though it was only part of what was undoubtedly a much more complex process, there was a gradual shift toward more extensive forms of land use. Such a theme does not necessarily imply that these internal processes were the sole motivation for change during the deep, almost cyclical, demographic disturbances of the third-second-millennium "dark ages," but it is at least not inconsistent with the present evidence for such changes.

Neither should this thesis be considered to be paradigmatic for the larger polities of northern Syria, where conditions may have been far more uniform, land considerably more scarce or population much greater, and the instruments of the state more pervasive. But again it is not inconsistent with the textual evidence to suggest that similar conditions, perhaps rendered in a more subtle fashion, may have underlain the motives for adjudicating border disputes, returning fugitives, realloting land, as well as explaining attitudes toward the *nayyalu* and the defection of peasants at Ugarit (Heltzer 1976), or similar actions including the forced sedentarization of Sutu at Alalakh (cf. the Idrimi inscription). Perhaps such regional variations explain, too, why demographic fluctuations are less prominent than in southern Syria and Palestine (Marfoe 1978: 411-73).

The long-term decline of rural settlements throughout the Bronze Age, too, is not disconsonant with our present knowledge of Late Bronze Age society in southern Syria, or with the process of rural "withdrawal" from the urban polities of this period, both so vividly sketched by Mendenhall (1962; 1974), Liverani (1965), Heltzer (1976) and others. It seems hardly coincidental that the increasing disparities between zones mentioned earlier are coterminous with more frequent references in the epigraphic evidence to ʿApiru and Shasu in the Late Bronze period, the breakdown of rural order and the prominence of internecine strife, the collapse of royal legitimacy through dynastic breaks, and the usurpation of local kingship by an imperial hegemony.[19] With the erosion of the urban agricultural base, com-

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pounded by such measures as ruthless taxation, coercion and constant military actions, with the economic well-being of the cities more reliant on commerce to balance the increasing disparities between zones, yet with such traffic hindered by the dissident elements engendered by the city, with the authority of kingship more dependent on the maintenance of the social order, yet with such order requiring a conspicuous ceremonial and theatrical display of wealth garnered from limited resources, and with the legitimacy of kingship supplanted by an imperial authority, the maintenance of the state was a fragile proposition at best. The politics of fragmentation was a vicious circle.

The foregoing theoretical reconstruction of the sociopolitical landscape of the Bronze Age assumes a more solid substance when framed within the perspective of later political development in the same region. Just as the valley was sundered into zones of shifting political affiliations prone to anarchy in the Late Bronze period, so in later historical contexts the ecological variations that rendered the lowlands into a mosaic of diverse localized regions and sociopolitical enclaves inhibited the centralization of the area into larger, more cohesive empires.

From the Hellenistic through the Islamic centuries, the weakening of a centralized imperial authority over its provinces and the subsequent decline of rural settlement have been understood in terms of the infiltration and depredations of "barbarians" on the frontiers, and so the literary traditions have been interpreted (e.g. Ibn Khaldun 1967: 118). But as far as the Biqa^{c} is concerned, this was only partly true. In one of the best-documented instances, the Ottoman empire from the 17th to the 19th centuries, both the decline of this power and its concerns on other fronts did in fact result in a vacuum of centralized authority in the Levant.[20] But this glosses over the realities of the political situation in southern Syria, where the absence of a consolidated power was largely the result of the Ottoman policy of neutralizing potential rivals by dividing provincial authority among three separate governors, and by allowing a certain degree of autonomy among local chieftains (who were in the main tax-farmers). Partitioned between the principal emirates in the mountains and the rival Harfush family factions on the plain, each backed by local governors in Saida, Tripoli, and Damascus, the valley was battleground for the ambitions of real and potential dynasts, much as in the Late Bronze period. The Biqa^{c} was thus a political no-man's-land, characterized by a diffuse assortment of political leaders and allegiances, ethnic identities, economic relations, and socio-cultural syncretisms.

Local political groups were rooted for the most part in regional enclaves, often focussed on an urban center, and frequently are said to have been mobilized along sectarian lines. Consequently, the lines of cleavage between rural blocs often have been characterized by the identification of the Shi^{c}ites with the spring oases of the north, centered around the main Harfush line in Baalbek; the Maronites along highland wadis focussed upon Zahle and the nearby Druze emirate; and the Druzes in the Wadi et-Teim and other highland passes oriented toward the Shihab family (Touma 1972: map IV). In actual fact, however, the interfaces between these groups were never clearly demarcated, and group recruitment and alignment were seldom maintained solely through sectarian lines. The Harfush emirs, with feudal lands near Qabb Elias in the south, often held the allegiance of Christian clients (Alouf 1925: 82); and travellers also report the emigration of Shi^{c}ites from the north to Christian villages in the mountains (Burckhardt 1822: 17). These local political units, headed by a local chief with dynastic ambitions, were in essence not corporate groups but true factions: conflict groups mobilized by a leader toward political goals, recruited not through a uniform mode of affiliation but through a diverse spectrum of kinship, clientship, and sectarian ties (Nicholas 1965; Bailey 1967: 51-55).

With political bonds overlapping and shifting between rival leaders, the periodic establishment of political authority over the valley by one center or another was often quickly shattered by the incursion of another rival (cf. Alouf: 78-102). In the classic sense of Lattimore (1962b: 480-81), political cohesiveness could not be established by the brief extension of military power, but only by the effective "range of civil administration and economic integration." In effect, each rival nullified any degree of administrative or economic integration achieved by the other—and, considering the intrinsic socioeconomic disequilibrium of the lowlands, this was seldom difficult. Thus the penetration of bedouin tribes such as the Shammar and Aneza confederations into the settled zone is explained not so much by aggression on their part as by the absence of local authority and the decline of rural settlements dating as far back as the 15th century (cf. Lapidus 1967: 28, 39, 251, n. 44, 254,

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n. 71, 245, n. 21; Ashtor 1976: 287-88; Tritton 1947-48; Lewis 1966).

Detailed information is lacking for earlier periods, but parallel situations may have existed during the Ptolemaic-Seleucid struggle for Syria. In any case, we know that in the aftermath of the six Syrian wars the rapid disintegration of the Hellenistic empires revealed a number of virtually autonomous urban principalities and tetrarchies not unlike the "city-states" of the Late Bronze period (Kahrstedt 1926; Jones 1971). Such a parallelism is not surprising when we consider the striking similarities between the Egyptian-Hittite and Seleucid-Ptolemaic partition of Syria into northern and southern zones demarcated by a line through Homs (Marfoe 1978: 628-35).

In the 9th to the 13th centuries, the Fatimid and Hamdanid partition of Syria (at virtually the same border) and the successive and overlapping hegemonies established by the Seljuks, Crusaders, and Ayyubids appear to have been a political veneer concealing an underlying patchwork of principalities, emirates, and feudal domains in southern Syria.[21] During the Crusader-Burid division of this region the chronicle of Ibn al-Qalanisi (Gibb 1932) vividly portrays an intricate mosaic of socio-political factions controlling the "grass-roots" of the valley, glossed over by western accounts such as that by William of Tyre (Babcock and Krey 1943). It is especially notable that both the Frankish and Burid rulers were able to polarize local groups into contending forces on both (or sometimes neither) sides of the fence. As Gibb (1932) notes, the foci for political leadership and group alignments were as diverse as in the Ottoman (or Late Bronze) periods. They included the Fatimid caliphate, the Crusader principalities, the Seljuk Turkmen princes (*atabegs*), independent Turkish military officers (emirs), independent or non-Seljuk Turkmen tribes, Arab tribes, local princes or feudal lords (as at Ras Baalbek and Labwe in the Biqa^{c}), local rural enclaves, and the poorer, armed citizen mobs (*ahdath*) of the cities. The period, in short, was not merely a tale of "ephemeral alliances," "calculated perfidies," or the "spirit of personal advantage and aggrandizement," but was also one of fragmented political units organized around family confederations (Humphreys 1977: 321), each drawing upon the resources of a number of local groups through diverse politicized ties.

Even in the Mamluk period the rise of minor clan chieftains—from the Banu Hanash, the Banu Hamra, and the Buhturids of the Gharb—to positions of local prominence was encouraged in part by Mamluk policy, and in part by the Mamluk struggle for northern Syria against the Ottomans, the Ilkhans of Iraq and Persia, and tribal confederations (Salibi and Hours 1968; Poliak 1939: 12-37; Lapidus 1967: 25-43). This chronic situation, which in effect paved the way for the Ottoman policy of backing local chieftains such as the ^{c}Alam al-Dins in later times (Harik 1968: 30), reflects the same political setting as the earlier Egyptian contention for Syria against the Hittites, Mittanians, and the encroachments of the Shasu.

It should be clear from the above discussion that in relatively recent times, political units based on the lowland plains were really factions: naturally small and unstable units coalescing around the central figure of a local chieftain (in effect the head of a premier local family), who lacked the means of tying a wider constituency to him beyond the "primordial" sentiments of kinship networks or sectarian affiliation, and who lacked the resources necessary for more than an extensive agrarian system on which to build an economic base beyond the bonds of clientship. The extension of political power by these lowland plains groups, based on regional enclaves and feudal domains centered on a local town, was therefore confined to a small radius of action defined by the limits of local environments, where sectarian clusters occurred, but overlapping with the extent of taxation privileges granted by a higher level of government. Beyond this radius, the full integration of marginal social groups relying on a broad pattern of shifting subsistence strategies was difficult to achieve not only because tax rights and patron-client relationships could be changed from year to year, but also because cultural identities and political affiliations under these conditions were diffuse, ambivalent, and constantly interchangeable. Although the political arena had been enlarged beyond the regional level, the political spectrum had been widened to include a broader range of leaders, and the political resources at the disposal of the leaders had multiplied into new economic niches. Thus the urban principalities and emirates of the later historical periods were constrained in much the same manner as the Bronze Age cities because the political base on which they built, the rural population, was as malleable as in earlier times. Beneath these broader political structures which attempted unification, therefore, there continually

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existed progressively lower substrata of smaller local units, whose cohesiveness was founded on common economic, social, cultural, ethnic, ecologic, or kinship ties—although they may have been expressed in other idioms. But even though the actual strands of local cohesiveness were diverse, it was these idioms—ideologically expressed as sectarian ties—that enabled local leaders to transform political realities into political action. In short, the ideological contribution to political integration—as seen in the identification of specific leaders with specific sectarian groups—became as much fact as it was fiction.

Changing Political Configurations in the Highlands

If the dynamic sociopolitical landscape of later historical times and the ecological relationships that underlay its structures bear more than a superficial resemblance to the social landscape of the Bronze Age, then it is possible that such consistencies in historical patterns may justify further comparisons of specific events. Consequently, to consider now the transformations that accompanied the emergence of supralocal polities in the highlands, I shall discuss two examples from more recent times, but with a slightly different regional focus, and then attempt to draw from these examples conclusions more far-reaching than their spatial and temporal contexts might suggest.

The Historical Role of Deforestation

The setting now shifts to the highlands overlooking the Biqa^{c}, the mountains of the Lebanon and Antilebanon ranges. Attaining peaks up to 3000 m in elevation, the gentle slopes of the piedmont, the steep slopes of the upper ranges, the deeply carved wadi systems, the small intermontane valley depressions, and the sporadic karstic springs of the highlands provided the basis for a totally different form of social organization. To understand the political structures that emerged in these areas, it is necessary to sketch the vast contrasts between the highland and lowland forms of adaptation.

Such divergencies can be illustrated best in the political economy of peasant impoverization. As noted earlier, the intensification of agriculture on the lowlands inevitably required capital which only could be provided by urban creditors. The high degree of risks inherent in such extensive farming systems, however, was never conducive to the procurement of the fixed rents, interests, and taxes that such a credit system entailed. The system frequently led to economic failure among the peasantry, and ultimately to the concentration of land into the hands of wealthy creditors, who in effect became absentee landlords. A case in point is the comparatively recently documented phenomenon of *musha^{c}* land tenure on the valley bottom and in the marginal steepe areas of inland Syria (Klat 1957; Latron 1936: 182-219; Weulersse 1946: 99-109). In this collective system of periodically redistributed land, the investment of individual capital in land development led to a stabilization of communal shares into private holdings. This was subsequently followed by the fragmentation of these private holdings into individual parcels that were too small and scattered to be efficiently productive. As some of these parcels became aggregated into larger holdings in the hands of solvent farmers, or when others either failed or ran further into debt through the sale of capital to meet such losses, debts, or interests, small holdings gradually became transformed into a stratified tenure system. Thus, out of a landholding system that originally was intended for insuring individual parity on the marginal lands of the steppe, there evolved a system that was polarized between landlords and sharecroppers, tenants, or wage laborers (who in fact preferred to share investment risks).

Although such a system of tenure cannot be documented for earlier times, parallel, if not identical, burdens are known to have plagued the peasantry. In the late Roman, late Mamluk, and Ottoman periods, heavy taxation and rents, for example, played a major role in rural flight and in the concentration of land in the hands of a landlord class. The establishment of imperial estates and colonies in the eastern Roman provinces is said to have led frequently to the impoverization of the *coloni*, or in the case of small freeholders, to the sale of capital and the abandonment of land (Jones 1958). In Syria, about one-sixth of the cultivated land was declared *agri deserti* (Jones 1964: 767-823; Whittaker 1976), and a roughly equivalent proportion of land was abandoned between Roman and Byzantine times in the Biqa^{c} (Marfoe 1978: 677-87). Similar conditions prevailed under the later Islamic taxation and tenure systems and were particularly noticeable under the *iqta^{c}* system during Mamluk

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times (Cahen 1953; Poliak 1939; Ashtor 1976: 283-84, 316-18). In the Ottoman period travellers noted that in certai- valley districts vast tracts of previously cultivated land had been abandoned because of innumerable tax abuses, exorbitant practises, high rents, excessive interest rates, rampant rural insecurity, and intense pastoral competition (Burckhardt 1822: 5-31; Volney 1959: 193, 308-13; Buckingham 1825: 479-90; Lewis 1966). There is also good reason to believe that similar circumstances recurred and played a role in the abandonment of rural areas during late Abbasid and Fatimid times (Marfoe 1978: 708-9, 716-19), and as previously noted, possibly in the Late Bronze period also.

In contrast, it seems doubtful that the highlands were as susceptible to land concentration as the lowlands. Certainly systems of land tenure such as *musha*[c] were characteristic only of the plains and were never practical on hillslopes. With the exception of some summer catch-crop cultivation and transhumance practised on the upland plateaus and intermontane valleys, agriculture in the Lebanese highlands was mainly dependent on terrace agriculture and intensive orchard cultivation.[22] Both required long term capital investments and promised only slow and gradual, but eventually lucrative, returns. In short, highland farming systems required residential stability.

Within such a system, settlement in the highlands excepting some areas on the lower western piedmont, was oriented around the deeply carved gorges and wadis where karstic spring discharge resulted in perennial water supplies near the outcrops of basaltic and sandstone layers. Here, along the sides of the wadis, the agricultural fields of a village stretched both up and downslope to obtain the maximum benefits from the widest range of precipitation and shade on the slopes, for both dryfarmed and irrigated plots. Generally, the plots held by a nuclear family would be distributed both up and downslope, with each elevation planted in a different crop (garden vegetables on the lowest, fruit trees next, vineyards and cereals farther up, and pastures beyond that), and with each crop ripening in succession from June to October. By aiming toward a broad range of crops which could be harvested in succession, a single community could for the most part be independent of both outside subsistence products and labor, since the local produce could afford a broad nutritional range and could be harvested from several plots over a number of months by a single household. Pastoralism was relegated to a few goats grazing on the underbrush of the pine-covered uplands. This close relationship between long-term investment in terraces and orchard crops, household self-sufficiency, and highland agriculture tended to lead to small freeholdings and tenant farming, since the fragmented systems of terraced plots were less amenable to land concentration and consolidation, discouraged short term loans, and in any case required less outside capital. At its worst the failure of small farms—as in the recent case of mulberry farming—led less to land concentration than it did to sharecropping. The index of land concentration and the percentage of farmers borrowing from moneylenders and large landowners have consistently been higher in the cereal growing, dryfarmed sectors of the plain than in the mountains (Gauthier and Baz 1960: I, 111; Issawi 1973: 74-75). Land concentration, when it took place, preferred the form of "lineage capture," in which—because land capital was not fixed but had to be worked to become an asset—the lineage which had the most sons and practised endogamy could increase its holdings by converting useless land into working terrace farms with each successive generation (Cresswell 1976). In other words, social stability in the highlands meant not the ability to fragment into smaller units and recoalesce into larger segments but involved instead the formation of large generationally tiered social pyramids, with each successive generation providing a rapidly broadening base of small residentially stable household units (cf. Polk 1963: 181-89; Peters 1963: 96-118).

Consequently, a totally different pattern developed on the highlands. Both terrace farming and lineage endogamy were self-reinforcing factors that led to a demographic stability unknown in the lowlands. Social groups, because of their physical immobility, were defined as much by their villages as by their lineages and their fixed socioeconomic relations with one another. The highland pastures were, furthermore, virtually immune to niche competition with lowland sheep or camel pastoralism, or from the sustained grazing of lowland goat herds at elevations above the snow line. The mountain communities were also safe from the depredations of nomad raids (as in the Elburz mountains of Iran, cf. de Planhol 1966). With villagers tied to their terraced fields, any depend-

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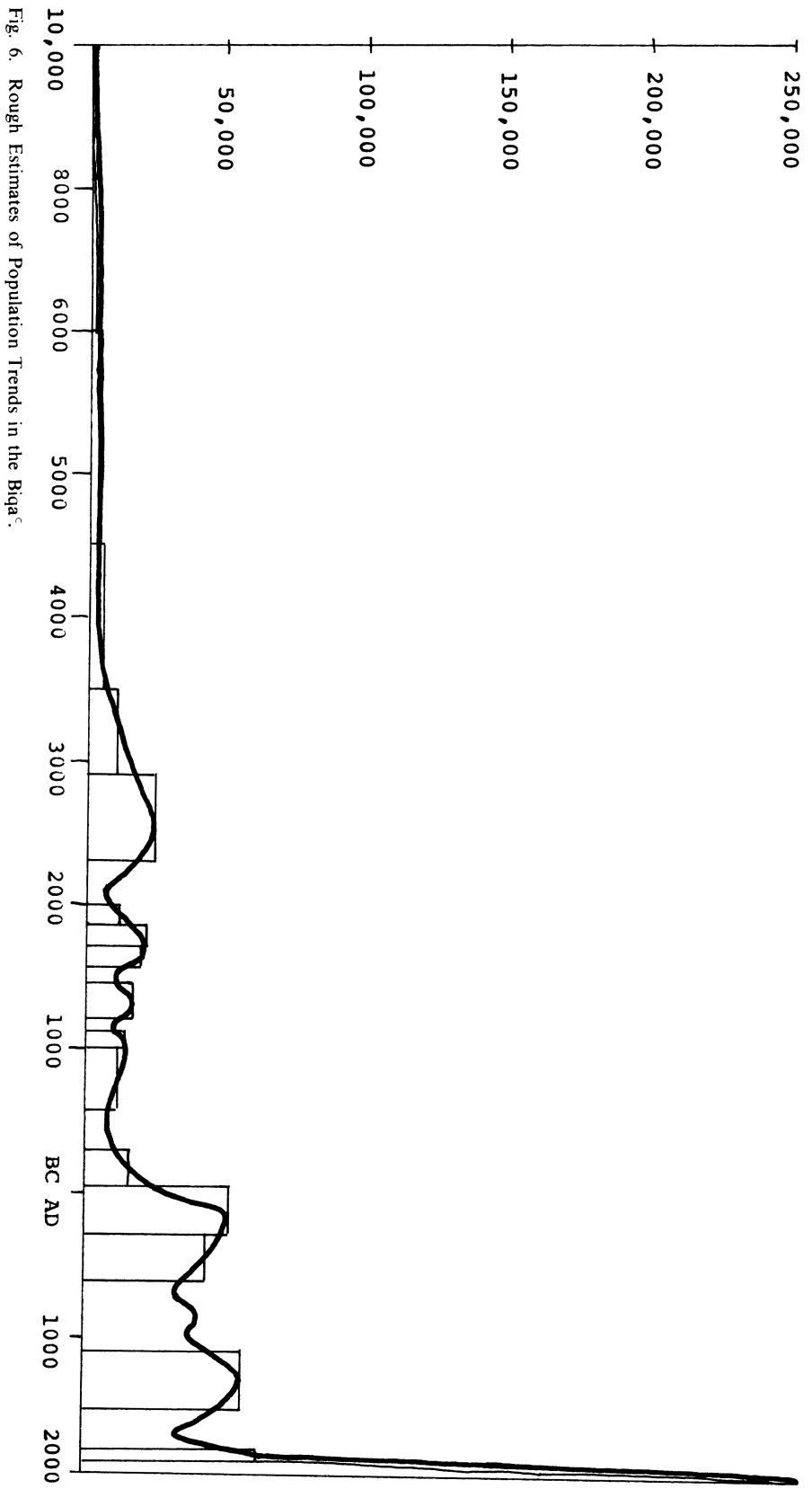

Fig. 6. Rough Estimates of Population Trends in the Biqa'.

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ence on pastoralism was limited to small herds of cattle and goats, restricted by the snow line to high mountain summer pastures and coastal winter fallow fields (Salame 1955; Thoumin 1936: 150-57; Fuller 1961: 24-26). Complete conversion to nomadic pastoralism was impossible in the highlands, and economic failure meant either wage labor, or more usually, emigration to or raids on the lowlands. Pastoral competition in the highlands, when it occurred, was usually between rival villages, and less often with lowland transhumanists, who usually lost out (e.g., Haddad 1968). Moreover, the flight of lowland peasantry was often directed to the highlands, which became places of refuge for dissident groups—a phenomenon that is characteristic too of many regions besides Lebanon. Rural flight and settlement abandonment on the valley bottom usually led to the establishment of a dissident minority—perhaps bandit enclaves in the mountains (as recently as this century), or to vertical transhumance modes that ultimately led to sedentarization and the formation of highland settlements (as at Yammouneh). In short, the decline of agriculture on the plains resulted in an inverse effect on the highlands: demographic growth and the expansion of highland settlement.

These patterns can be seen best in settlement trends drawn from the results of archaeological surveys. Although the Wadi Brissa inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II indicates that the lower slopes of the piedmont were still wooded in the 6th century B.C. (Langdon 1912: 33-37, 175-77), a number of Ptolemaic forts already were situated on the highlands overlooking the plain by the 3rd century (Polybius V 45.7-46.6), and the Zenon letters suggest that some commercial traffic across the forested mountains was possible (Harper 1928: 28-29). Certainly by the first centuries B.C./A.D., there were Ituraean strongholds in the mountains (Strabo XVI 2.18; Dessau 1892: no. 2683). The dramatic impact of these new vertically zoned microenvironments on farming systems can be seen in the expansion of agriculture (and settlement) from a Bronze Age maximum of 600-700 km^2 to at least about 1200 km^2 in the Roman period and the gradual shift of settlements toward the valley borders (Marfoe 1978: 649-70). The floodplains and the spring oases on the valley bottom soon were supplanted in importance by the alluvial fans and piedmont wadis, where as deforestation progressed terracing and spring sources permitted an increasing dependence on intensive orchard cultivation. The rapid advance of terracing and deforestation upslope—to the extent that forest preserves had to be protected by imperial edict under Hadrian (Brown 1969: 152-54; Renan 1864-74: 257-74)—was reflected in the new levels of population and settlement reached. Although estimates are necessarily rough, population in the Roman and Mamluk periods may have been three times as high as in the Early Bronze period.[23] And in the 19th century A.D., zones that had hitherto been pastures—the rocky piedmont slopes, the fossil fans, and the ephemeral piedmont wadi systems—were supporting a population density perhaps four times greater than during the Bronze Age. The western piedmont wadis, virtually unoccupied during the Bronze Age, were perhaps the most densely settled microenvironments of all; in the Roman period, they may have been five times as high as the overall Bronze Age density for the valley, and by the Ottoman period, this may have increased to ten times the Bronze Age maximum. Most significantly, population never agian fell to Bronze Age levels, even during periods of decline. Instead, such demographic fluctuations were transformed into new patterns of rural "withdrawal," in which settlement contracted not to the floodplains and spring oases, but to the alluvial fans and especially to the highlands.

The Emergence of Highland Polities: the Ituraean Principality

It is in these highlands that we find one of the first unified supralocal polities of the region, the Ituraean principality of *Chalcis sub Libanum*,[24] probably formed in the late 2nd century B.C. from Arab groups that had been settling in the region for a long time. A 7th-century-B.C. Assyrian report of Arab movements in the area (Waterman 1930: ABL 414) and Arrian's account that Alexander had crossed the Lebanon mountains to do battle with the local Arab population during the siege of Tyre (Anabasis of Alexander II 20.3-4) suggest that the population was relatively homogeneous until the Hellenistic period. Certainly, by the early 1st century B.C. a unified polity had emerged under one Ptolemaeus, son of Mennaeus, which encompassed the Biqa^{c}, the settled districts of the Lebanon and Antilebanon piedmont, the coastal strip as far as Sidon, Berytus, and Akkar, and the eastern steppe as far as Yabrud, Abila, Batanaea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis.

Neither survey nor textual evidence are sufficient to elucidate the local social groups upon which this unification was based, but Strabo, Josephus, and Quintus Aemilius were unanimous

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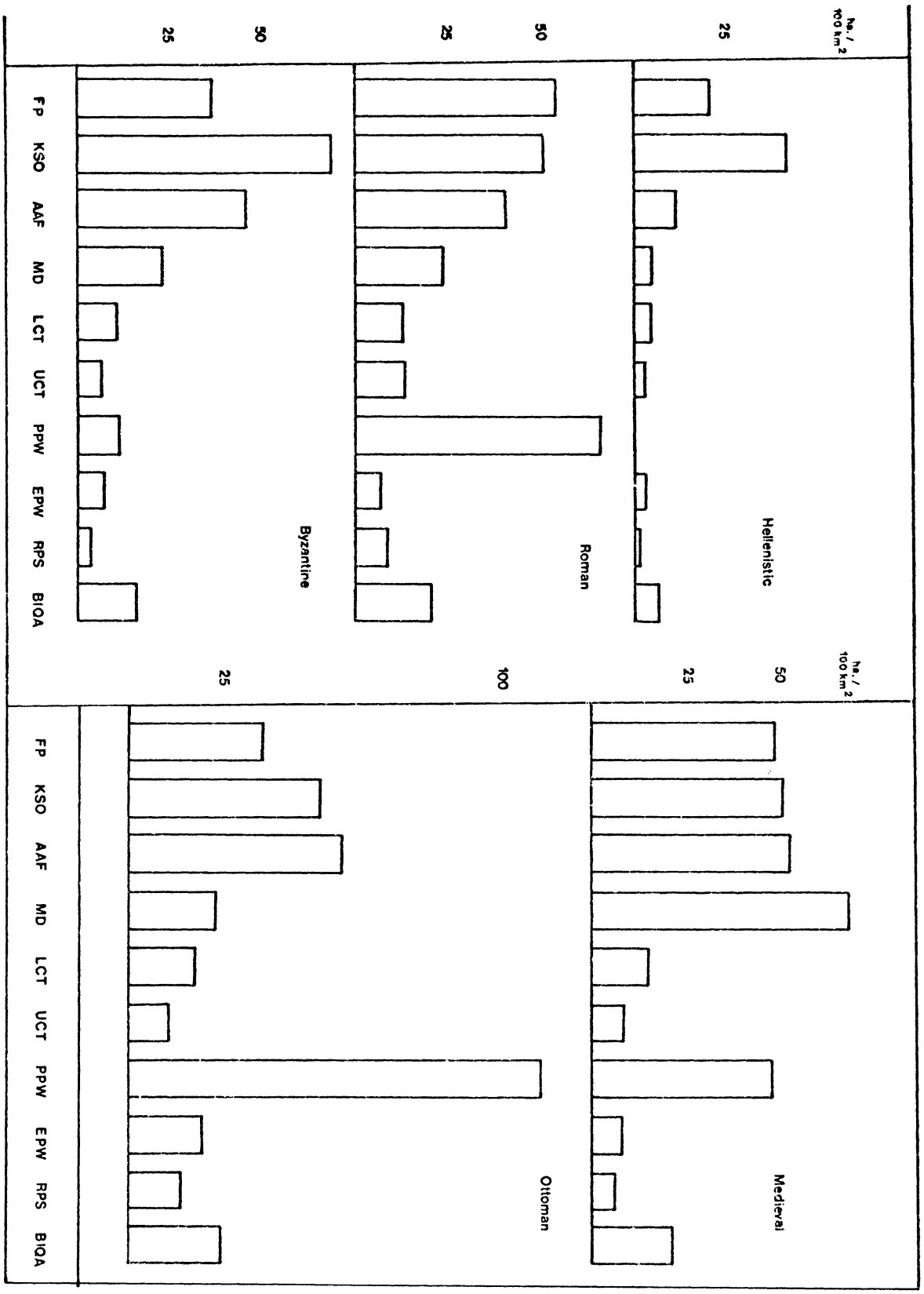

Fig. 7. Settlement Density (in hectares per 100 km^2) within Microenvironments from Hellenistic to the Ottoman Period (for a key to the abbreviations, see map, fig. 2).

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in portraying the Ituraeans as mountain brigands who preyed upon the lowlands from their hill forts.[25] Excavations at Baalbek and Anjar, however, have shown that the principality was an urban one, with a capital at Chalcis and a cult center at Heliopolis under the leadership of a tetrarch (Jidedjian 1975; Wiegand 1921-25; Chehab n.d.). Furthermore, a commercial basis for the Ituraean expansion to the lowlands outside the Biqaᶜ is strongly suggested by the minting of coins at Heliopolis (Wroth 1899: 281; Rey-Coquais 1967: 33), and the presence of Hellenistic and early Roman settlements on the lower piedmont dominating the lowland trade routes that circumvented the mountains from the coast to the steppe. Both Chalcis and Heliopolis were situated on the foothills at the head of an important pass into the valley and near an important spring outlet. Although only two Hellenistic hill forts have so far been identified firmly (Qalaᶜat es-Saluk and Mejdel Anjar; Marfoe 1978: 631), this limited evidence suggests that the kingdom owed its formation not so much to local terrace agriculture, which was still limited on the foothills, but to the domination and exploitation of lowland resources: the control of farming enterprises on the valley bottom, the taxation of and participation in commercial traffic which traversed the passes that they controlled, and the subjugation and taxation of pastoralists from the eastern steppe through their control of the karstic spring oases. In short, to the extent that the archaeological evidence and the references by Strabo and Josephus converge, the Ituraean principality appears to have emerged through a similar set of circumstances as its contemporary and rival, the kingdom of the Nabataeans, against whom it struggled for the domination of Damascus (cf. Hammond 1973; Peters 1977; 1978). And these circumstances clearly indicate that the application of this power was possible only after the highland slopes had been deforested to some degree. If their early image as mountain brigands accurately reflects their origins, the heart of the principality was firmly rooted in the highlands, from which their expansion to the steppe and littoral was purely a secondary movement.

The Integrative Transformation: the Lebanese Emirate

A much later but far more instructive example (and hence more deserving of detailed treatment) of highland political structure in southern Syria is the Maᶜn and Shihab emirate in the Lebanese mountains. Although the Lebanese emirate neither possessed the full apparatus of statecraft nor maintained a standing military force, the fragile unification achieved over this area during the 17th to 19th centuries perhaps can be considered an experiment in secondary state formation that was cut short before the elaborate bureaucratic structure of a state was fully developed.[26] On the eve of unification the virtually impenetrable mountains were broken into a mosaic of feudal domains, each originating (at least in tradition) from the immigration of dissident sects between the 7th and 11th centuries. By the 15th century the population was rougly divided into a southern Druze enclave and a northern Maronite sector, each subregion ruled by a hereditary chief. Early in the 17th century, however, the Druze chieftain of the Shuf district in southern Lebanon, Fakr ed-Din II, was able to establish a fragile hegemony over the entire mountain from Jebel Amil to Jibbat Bsharri and, for brief moments, even over the highland districts of the Hawran and ᶜAjlun in Jordan and Safed and Nablus in Palestine. Partly as a result of the loosening grip of the Ottoman empire at this time, this transitory unity was accomplished largely through the skillful manipulation of retainers at the Ottoman court, adroit allegiances and political machinations, and military conquests by a relatively large mercenary army. In this sense, the mountain emirate—although it was in part endowed with legitimacy by the recognition of the Ottoman court—can be considered to be an embryonic "conquest" state.

To reduce what was an intricate structure—and what is now a national myth of Lebanses unity—to its barest essentials, let us outline broadly the paradoxical elements at the base of this structure that served both to underlie and to undermine the unification of the emirate. At its greatest extent in the 18th century, the emirate was composed of 13 traditional feudal provinces. These regional enclaves were aligned in an east-west fashion to cross-cut the altitudinal variations and to follow the wadi systems of the highlands. Settlement patterns consisted of numerous small villages stretched out along the sides of each wadi, mostly near tributary gullies and springs.[27] Urban centers appeared only at the junction of the lowlands and the highlands, especially on the coast, and were commercial rather than administrative centers. Indeed, the capital of the Shihab emirate at Dayr al-Qamar (and later Beit ed-Dine) was little more

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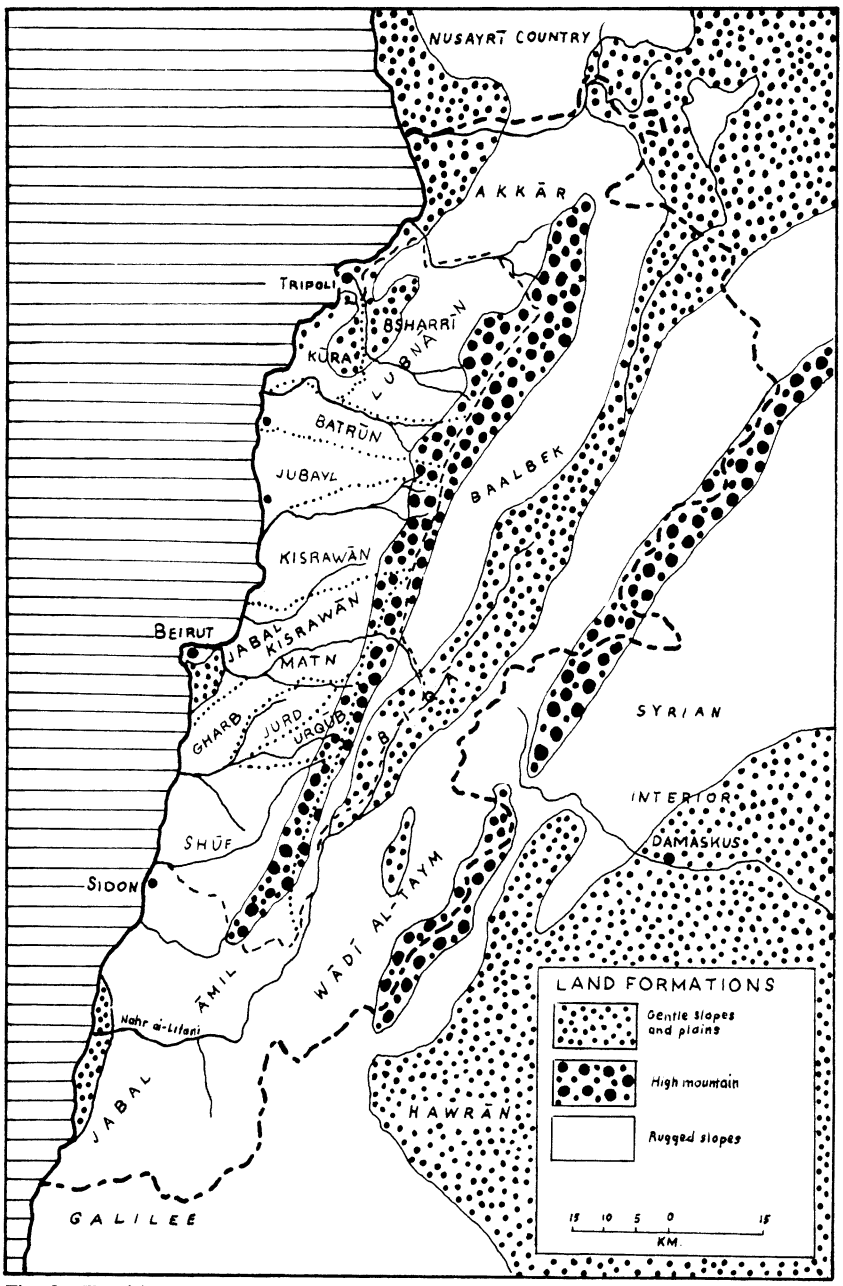

Fig. 8. Traditional Feudal Districts of Mount Lebanon and Their Relationships to Land Formations.

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than a small town. Except for the lowest piedmont slopes and coastal plains, the settlement landscape of the highland emirate was a relatively undifferentiated one, at least as far as settlement hierarchies were concerned. It was comprised of a series of lateral dendritic networks, which solidified into minor nodes at small market towns or were distorted on occasion by the occurrence of small mountain springs. This replicative pattern of cellular units, each roughly uniform in area and in number of settlements, formed, in essence, the basis of the feudal domains and hereditary chieftainships, whose borders were firmly delineated by the sharp contours of the major wadis.

Within each domain the population of a village or a cluster of villages consisted of large immobile lineages which, because of the long term investments involved with terrace agriculture and spring irrigation, were tied to a permanent village and district (cf. Polk 1963: 66-71, 181-89). At the base of the social pyramid each household was virtually self-sufficient on its plots of land. Furthermore, with the introduction of mulberry cropping which returned substantial profits and necessitated cooperative efforts in maintaining family silk factories, there was little stimulus for emigration (Tannous 1941). Regionally, too, the vertical zoning of the highlands imposed a degree of economic interdependence between villages at different elevations, so that local disparities in crops and other produce could be balanced.[28] The bonds between and within these villages were also strengthened by the fact that they almost always shared the same east-west wadi system and spring sources, whose erosional patterns and subsurface water seepage required a degree of cooperation to insure the equitable division of irrigation water and the maintenance of terracing systems, often established by written contract (Polk 1963: 64-70). In some cases, the differences in elevation also meant that the variations in harvest schedules permitted relatives from other villages to come and help at the arduous task of processing the harvest. Instances are known of as many as 500 visitors arriving to aid a village at this time in return for preserves and other surpluses (Peters 1963: 82). Such festive annual affairs served further to reinforce social ties between villages. Because of the limitations on animal husbandry and irrigation the isolated quarrels over pasturage and water rights were seldom major disruptive factors, and in fact they were more an agent for social cohesiveness than conflict. When disputes did arise, they were resolved through the intervention of a higher intermediary, usually a regional chief or the like (Ayoub 1965; 1966; Nader 1965). In essence, therefore, the residential immobility of each village and its terraced fields and the restrictions imposed by terraceable lands upon village populations resulted in a series of fixed socioeconomic relations within and between villages. The social landscape that emerged from these relations consisted of a number of overlapping lineage pyramids, tied to each other by cross-kinship bonds, with the head of the most important lineages—the feudal chiefs—at the peak.

At the regional level such a segmental structure lent itself to fixed political allegiances and ties; but at the same time its very fragmentation into regional units headed by a local leader whose ties to his following were consanguineous, sectarian, and economic in nature formed the basis for dissenting interests and partisan politics. At the interregional level, group solidarity extended beyond the local province into larger enclaves, where social cohesiveness was largely reinforced by a number of factors inherited from the Medieval *iqtaᶜ* and the numerous attempts by the Crusaders and Mamluks to purge schismatic sects in the mountains.[29] Among the Druzes a tight, hierarchically ranked structure bound the peasants to an overall feudal chief. This feudal hierarchy had not been established by land concentration and peasant impoverization but from outright land grants awarded by the Shiᶜite Fatimids, and later by the Mamluks themselves, who enrolled the Druzes into their armies and recognized their local chiefs with official titles and military ranks.

Outside this feudal structure another large regional enclave in southern Lebanon was formed by the Shiᶜite population. In the villages lineages were ranked by their claims to closest descendancy from ᶜAli, their eponymous ancestor. The major lineages formed a core of "Learned Families" who annually reinforced their social position by controlling the most sacred festival of the calendar, the "Miracle" or "Passion Play" commemorating the martyrdom of Husain at the battle of Kerbala, on the tenth day of Muharram, *Ashuraᶜ* (Peters 1963: 117-23). Thus while social tensions did exist among and between villages, stratification among the Druzes and Shiᶜites of southern Lebanon was maintained without an excessive exploitation of the peasantry (at least during the early emirate), who remained for the most part freeholders, sharecroppers, and loyal levies. This structure,

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which to some degree was self-imposed, served in turn to bind feudal regions into larger sectarian enclaves.

The Maronites, who also retained a similar feudal structure from Medieval times, had a far looser regional organization, probably because they were never formally organized into the Moslem armies and had no system of ranking lineages. In fact, although a similar history of Crusader and Mamluk persecutions had welded them into a warrior peasantry, feudal organization among the Maronites never gained the social acceptancy that it did among the Druzes—probably because local feudal chiefs had become exploitative tax-farmers under the Mamluks. Instead, group solidarity focused on the Maronite patriarch and clergy, all of whom were derived from peasant origins (Harik 1968: 74-95). This loose organization probably explains why the movement for unification originated among the more organized Druzes but was quickly accepted by the Maronites. Indeed, soon after the establishment of the united emirate, the Maronites are said to have gradually assumed the Druze organization (Touma 1972: 50-52). These unique and deeply embedded social norms may have played a part in generating further mountain solidarity—a solidarity in part guaranteed by the natural barriers and the largely self-enclosed and independent nature of the highlands. Whatever the stimulus for unification, it found a social structure that lent itself to the instruments of integration. But it is also apparent that these feudal hierarchies themselves formed a wider segmental structure within which the regional systems were nested. With each descending tier of the segmentary hierarchy, there was an increasing core of local autonomy and self-reliance that was intrinsically conducive to the decentralization of power.

What is most curious about the Lebanese unification, therefore, is not that it ultimately fell apart but that it stayed together at all for over two centuries. For most of its history, a precarious stability was maintained despite numerous centrifugal forces. The fragmentation of regional enclaves was but one divisive factor. Other factors were the lack of a centralizing bureaucracy and the absence of fulltime enforcement powers, except by feudal levy and hired mercenaries. In addition, the constant attempts at intervention by the Ottomans limited the organizational capabilities of local rulers, especially where the principal concern of the emirate was to retain Ottoman recognition by raising revenues from its domains for the Sublime Porte. Where administrative instruments for political integration were virtually nonexistent, then, the main basis for social cohesion was the fixed socioeconomic relations of the social landscape. But in so far as this was a passive element (a social context rather than a social instrument), the principal base for political mobilization lay in what might be called "the cultural apparatus" of the polity. Just what this cultural apparatus was can be discerned from perhaps the single most important indication of the fragile political balance, the perpetual problems of legitimization that plagued the office of the emir.

Once the social and political weaknesses and strengths of the emirate are discerned, it will be seen that it was ruled by a *primus inter pares*. Largely as a result of the Ottoman tax-farming system, the emirate was invested in a single family (though not necessarily from a single line of descent), nominated and confirmed by the consensus of a council formed by the major hereditary family chiefs and fiefholders. The emir, in essence, stood at the top of only one of many interlocking social pyramids. In theory a legitimate ruler required legal hereditary ties, the approval of the council, and the qualities of military leadership. Thus after the death of Fakr ed-Din and the end of his male line, the Shihab family, which had the closest claims of kinship, was able to attain this office through the support of the council. Subsequently, all the Shihab emirs who came to rule were warriors proven in battle (Harik 1968: 38-61). But in practise, after this break in dynastic lines (and despite the fact that Maʿn rule had lasted only one generation), the crucial task of legitimization was a constantly recurring theme throughout the course of the later Shihab emirate. The Shihabs, first of all, were Sunni Muslims who professed to be Druzes only after they had gained the emirate. Second, the Maʿn family had succeeded the earlier Medieval Buhturid family as the head of the age-old Qaysite faction. Thus when the Shihabs came to power, they too assumed the leadership of this faction against the ʿAlam al-Din family, which led the Yemenite faction and was a rival claimant to the emirate. To be sure, the Qaysite-Yemenite struggle was a mask for all kinds of political disputes, but for the mountain Druzes it became ideologically a point of real contention (Touma 1972: 61-75). And it was precisely in these perpetual disputes that the Ottomans became adroit at manipulating mountain politics, either by supporting the ʿAlam al-Dins, or by backing rival Shihabi claimants to the emirate. In short, because

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the finer points of legitimacy were constantly blurred in practice, the "cultural apparatus" of the polity lay largely in the ideas of order perceived by the local regional units and in the accepted standards of political action within this theoretical framework. Ultimately, polity revolved around the ideological affiliation of the ruling emir and, in the later stages of the emirate, in the changing images of the *iqtaᶜ* system and the Maronite ideology as perceived by its participants.

If this separation of what underlay the emirate from what the emirate actually was allows us to discern the ties between the two, it also allows us to see that the aspirations of the emirate always exceeded its grasp and eventually failed. In a study of factionalism and conversion in the Hindu Kush, Canfield (1973) points out that conversion can be a mechanism by which social centrifugal forces can be channeled into centripetal "parapolitical" ties. Such an ideological mechanism for redirecting otherwise divergent forces into a cohesive agent can be seen in southern Syria also. On the naturally fragmentary landscape of the lowlands, one such example has been noted already: the occurrence of *taqiyya*, or dissimulation, whereby schismatic groups such as the Shiᶜites or Druzes on the valley floor could outwardly profess to Sunni orthodoxy but in practise would secretly retain their old faith. However, these old allegiances were in fact forgotten after several generations when orthodoxy became actual practise as well as theory. As a case in point, Salibi (1965: xviii) has attributed to this mechanism, rather than to immigration, the anomalous transformation of the valley population from predominantly Shiᶜite and Druze groups in the early Middle Ages to Sunni groups in the later Middle Ages. Indeed, resistance to change has survived to this day only among the badlands of the semiarid north, where large pockets of Shiᶜites still remain (Clarke and Fisher 1972: 148-51). A similar recurrence of this sort of sociocultural transmutation can be discerned during the Ottoman period, when travelers' accounts and archaeological surveys (noted above) indicate that the valley bottom was abandoned and most of its inhabitants had fled to the highlands. This movement of Shiᶜite immigrants into the Christian villages of the northern and central highlands accounts for the tremendous growth in the Maronite mountain population between the early 16th and 18th centuries, when numbers rose from 40,000 to about 150,000 (Harik 1968: 22-23).[30] In essence, sociocultural flexibility in the lowlands meant that conversion could become a mechanism through which dissident or minority groups could enhance their survival.

But did this apply to the mountain population? The profession to Druzism by the Sunni Shihabs soon after they attained the emirate and the later conversion of Milhem Shihab and his descendants to Maronite Christianity suggest that this was a viable political strategy in the highlands. At a time when the Maronites were clearly gaining the upper hand in the Druze-Maronite coalition under the emirate, the professed conversion of one Shihab family branch to Maronite Christianity, while another branch remained Sunni, meant that the various branches of the family represented the major sectarian divisions in Lebanon. Concurrent with increasing Maronite political power, the dramatic growth in the Christian population, and the increasing commercialization of its economy, the narrow limitations to population growth imposed by the nature of terraced agriculture forced the expanding Maronite population southward into the Druze enclaves. Here, at this contact zone between the two major sectarian enclaves, a growing rift between two Druze factions, the Yazbakis and the Janbalats, permitted the Maronites to exploit the situation in support of the losing Yazbaki Druze cause (Polk 1963: 17-31). the Yazbakis, who held the feudal districts closest to the Christian enclaves—the ᶜUrqub, the upper Gharb, and the Jurd—began to identify themselves with their more powerful neighbors and supporters, the Maronites. As the Yazbaki differences with the southern Druze Janbalats grew wider, the intermingling of the Christians among the northern Druze communities resulted in a transformation of the "social customs" of the latter, in much the same way as the Christians had emulated the Druze organization in the early days of the emirate, with the result that most of the Yazbaki areas in southern Lebanon became Christian regions (Polk 1963: 127-33).

It is apparent that only a fragile network of sectarian and feudal ties aligned the segmentary structure of the Lebanese highland population, which despite its residentially fixed contexts formed a highly shifting political base. The reach of the emirate thus depended on the ability of the emir to strengthen the slender network of parapolitical ties by bridging the diverse social networks that surrounded him. But to perceive the rise of a polity as a process of integration also permits us to perceive its fall as the result of the reverse process. What ultimately led to the disintegration of the emirate was the severance of

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the same ties that held it together: the loss of legitimacy through a change in the ideological standards by which the office of emir was judged, together with a change which no emir could have predicted or forestalled, the breakdown of the local residential units which formed the demographic base of the emirate.

The first factor was the new political ideas propagated by the Maronite patriarchate and clergy through religious societies and schools. Propounded by the early Maronite historians "not as a scholarly pursuit but 'as an expression of national pride' " (Salibi 1959: 15; Harik 1968: 128), these new ideas transformed the Maronite community's perception of the traditional *iqtaᶜ* as the basis of social order and the prerogatives of the ruling class and ". . . challenged the system's principle of legitimacy, the position of the traditional actors, and the institution's governing authority relationships" (Harik 1968: 166). There was, in effect, a rejection of the social framework—the "feudal contract"—on which the emirate was founded, in favor of a social order centered around the Maronite patriarch, resulting in an alienation of the Druze population and an alteration in its perception of the natural order (the *iqtaᶜ* system; cf. Harik 1968: 127-289; 1966). In this sense the ideological contribution to political integration was more than a token gesture; it guided the political actions of the leader and provided a standard by which the leader could be judged by his constituents.

The second factor was the initial breakdown that occurred when the expanding Christian population penetrated into the northernmost Druze districts and allowed their long-standing regional relationships to dissolve. Even more catalytic in this regional dissolution was the domination of the lowland littoral and parts of the Biqaᶜ, the windfall wealth brought in by the expanding silk market and the closer Christian links with the western world, and the rapidly burgeoning population in the mountains (over 200,000 at the peak of unification in contrast to the 40,000 or so in the Biqaᶜ, and subsisting on less than 0.5 hectare per capita).[31] These developments led to a dispersal and overflow of mountain groups into the lowlying areas and onto the coastal cities and inland plains, where they intermingled with each other. This resulted in the formation of large, shifting uprooted groups in the lowlands, who in many respects resembled the frontier population of the Biqaᶜ. A final blow occurred when the silk market collapsed in the 19th century. Those terrace farmers who had converted from a self-sufficient, balanced, broad-spectrum farming system to a specialized cash crop became insolvent, and rather than convert back to subsistence farming many chose to abandon their lands, either emigrating overseas or seeking wage labor in the cities and tenancy on lowland estates (Tannous 1941). Thus the political unity of the Lebanese emirate—or rather the fragile regional hegemony behind the modern myth of a centralized state—in part dissolved when the cohesive stability of the highland farming system on which it was based became disrupted by a demographic collapse of the old regional enclaves.[32] But perhaps the most striking and symptomatic expressions of this collapse, at least as far as contemporary documents are concerned, were the sectarian upheavals of the mid-19th century, when coutless local clashes signalled the failure of the emirate to maintain its grasp and invited the intervention of the resurgent Ottoman court and the western powers. History, in the final analysis, overtook this incipient monarchy in the form of French troops and an international commission.

Ancient and Modern Societies in Comparative Perspective

Let us now retrace the connecting thread in the preceding discussion in order to emphasize three points. (1) The first is methodological. The analysis of sociopolitical structures over a broad range of spatial and temporal contexts helps us to frame perspectives on localized situations. Whether core and periphery on the Bronze Age lowlands, or segmentary social pyramids in the late historical highlands, the analysis of these historical societies from the bottom up and from the periphery in allows us to distinguish more clearly forces that are only rarely discernible in the textual sources. (2) The second point is conceptual. Appreciation of local components may lead to highly dynamic reconstructions of ancient societies which allow us to perceive changes in sociopolitical organization as a process of integration and disintegration. (3) The final point is factual and has to do with what the actual reconstructions may turn out to be. If we are right, political unification in southern Syria has depended less on administrative institutions than we have assumed and more on ecological relationships, the permeability of cultural boundaries, and the justification of ideological ties by the maintenance of the perceived natural social order.

As far as the wider applicability of my thesis is

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PERIODS	DESERT		STEPPE		RIFT VALLEY			HIGHLANDS		
	Negev and Sinai (Thompson 1975)	Judaean Desert (Kochavi 1972)	Golan (Kochavi 1972)	Northeast Jordan (Mittmann 1970)	Jordan Valley (Ibrahim-Sauer 1973)	Amuq (Braidwood 1937)	BIQA^c	Ephraim/Menashe (Kochavi 1972)	Benjamin/Ephraim Kochavi 1972; Campbell 1968)	Judah (Kochavi 1972)
Upper Paleolithic			8				2			
"Kebaran"							2			
"Natufian"							2			
Early PPN ("A")				4	5		18 1			
Late PPN ("B")			1				1			
Early PN				2		18 7	29			
Late PN/C					15		74			
(Late) Chalcolithic	209	20	13	3		30	54	2	8-10	7
EB I				40		11				
EB II	78	6	22	31	8	50	67	24	14-24	6
EB III				27						
EB IV (-MB I)	473	0	6	24	8	39 4	16	4	3-4	2
MB IIA							28			
MB IIB	13	2	28	23	14	5 61	61 58	39	17-24	9
MB IIC										
LB I	13	0	8-10	24	6	31	31	9-11	11-17	4
LB II							44			
Iron I		22	10	83	19	46	51	65	18-32	3
		77	21					184	76	61
Iron II		26	5	57	17	58	41	119	31-71	34
Persian		0	0	1	8		20	77	5-21	30
Hellenistic		10	9	50	12	110	31	47	34-45	48
Roman		127	91	122	31		140	70	50+	101
Byzantine		108	125	250	20	16	77	200	117+	153
Early Islamic		48	12	146	19			1	67+	2
				170	7					
Medieval		3	9	202	58	89	122	121	20+	90
Ottoman		6	60				142	72	35+ *	66

* does not include Sapin's and Campbell's results after Roman period

Fig. 9. Rough Correlations of Settlement Trends in the Biqa^c (in numbers of sites) with Trends Indicated by Survey Data from Syria, Palestine and Transjordan.

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concerned, the first two points are more significant, given the programmatic purpose of this essay. But hypothetical as my thesis appears to be, I believe that it is possible to indicate that such an approach may prove to be instructive in understanding at least two other widely disparate cases.

The Hebrew Kingdom

Especially comparable to the Lebanese emirate is the emergence and development of ancient Israel. A detailed discussion of the formative processes lies beyond the scope of this paper, but a number of developmental tendencies in common with the preceding case studies may be pointed out. The accompanying chart illustrates the overall trends in settlement growth and decline across a number of regions in Syria and Palestine according to archaeological surveys.[33] Although a lack of uniformity in surface survey methods precludes detailed comparisons between these regions, there is a certain degree of congruency between the Biqa^{c} and Palestine. One particularly prominent feature that emerges is the extraordinary growth in settlement on the Palestinian highlands in Iron I. To be sure, the central hill country of Palestine—lower and more easily deforested than the Lebanese highlands—had been occupied as early as the Early Bronze period, but in the main settlement was restricted to the small highland valleys (Campbell 1968; Sapin 1968-69). The highlands were also settled during the Amarna period, as the activities of Lab$^{\flat}$ayu and Abdi-Hepa indicate, but despite these textual references several surface surveys have so far uncovered only a sparse scattering of sites within the inland basins (Kochavi et al. 1972; Campbell 1975; Sapin 1968-69). However, about two centuries after the Amarna letters the "Israel" stela of Merneptah would appear to locate "Israel" somewhere in the central highlands (Yurco 1977). Certainly by Iron I the pattern of settlement in the highlands was transformed by the widescale establishment of terrace agriculture on the hilly slopes (Stager 1975: 236-40; also Ron 1966; de Geus 1975). The most obvious inference, therefore, is that deforestation had still not progressed very far upslope in Late Bronze II, but by Iron I the gradual degradation of the woodland areas may have reduced many of the arable slopes down to a shrubby vegetation.

In the subsequent formation and development of the Hebrew kingdom(s), the elaboration of the Israelite state institutions into a highly centralized monarchical organization with administrative subdivisions in Iron I (cf. Bright 1975) was followed in Iron II by further growth in regional settlement and by the development of large cities such as Samaria and Jerusalem.[34] However one works out the precise chronology, the fact remains that survey results suggest between Iron I and II a rough doubling of settlements in the north and perhaps a tenfold increase in the south. In Jerusalem, Stager (1975: 243) has suggested that population may have climbed from about 600-900 in the 10th century to about 2000-3000 in the 8th century, and then to 7500-12,000 a century later.

In the Biqa^{c} the appearance of highland settlements, terrace agriculture, large cities, and territorial states does not begin until the 3rd or 2nd century B.C., and not until the Roman period do such features become as prominent in the archaeological record in Syria as in Palestine. The conclusion to be drawn from this comparison, then, is that the ecological conditions that laid the social foundations for highland polities in southern Syria (beginning with the Ituraean principality) appeared much earlier in Palestine. This takes on meaning for the origins of the Israelite monarchy, which unquestionably revolved around the activities that took place, at least initially, in the highlands of Judah and Samaria. The political movements that ultimately led to unification, the events that surround the formative stages of the state at the time of Samuel, Saul, and David, were all focussed on the central highlands. However, the movements into the lowlands, into the Esdraelon and Jezreel, to the Huleh basin, onto the Philistine plain and the western Shephelah, and finally into the Negev, would all appear to be secondary actions engendered in part by the inherent advantages possessed by the highlanders.

Beyond these broad similarities there are further, striking parallelisms between the formation and maintenance of the Hebrew kingdom and the highland polities that emerged in Lebanon. One parallel is suggested by the characterization of the early Ituraeans as brigands, in comparison with the "bandit" activities of David around the hill country. Other common themes would appear to be the emergence of cult centers at Jerusalem and Baalbek, the gradual expansion of territory against lowland groups, and the control of trade across these lowland areas. But however this may be, there is at least one fundamental divergence between these two cases: the deforestation of the

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Lebanese highlands had not yet progressed to the point where terrace farming might have been the unifying ecological feature among the Ituraeans that it probably was among the Israelites.

Probably a more rewarding comparison, therefore, would be between the appearance of the Maᶜni and Shihabi emirate and the early development of the Israelite monarchy. In this regard, the relationships that underlay the sociopolitical structure of the Lebanese emirate suggest that a similar foundation of ecological and social factors in the Israelite kingdom and its predecessors should be sought. The internal cohesiveness of the Lebanese regional enclaves (traditional feudal domains, in effect) and the fixed relationships of highland farming systems suggest that one fruitful line of inquiry would be to investigate the relationships between the Israelite regional pattern of "tribes" and their geographical locations. It has been suggested, for instance, that these tribes bear a resemblance to Kirchoff's (1959) conical clans, and if so more formal comparisons with the ranking of the Shiᶜite "Learned" lineages may be called for. This sort of social inquiry, of course, is essentially what Mendenhall (1962; 1974; 1975) has been arguing for years; and with but a few discrepancies the core and frontier theme I have elaborated is in close agreement with his framework. One difference is that I perceive the Bronze Age "city-states" to be much looser and less despotic structures than Mendenhall and others suppose, and hence I see the "withdrawal" of rural groups as less a "rebellion" than a basic, alternate strategy in adaptation—one aspect of a constant demographic fluidity.[35] Second, I would emphasize the Sinai Covenant less as a concrete event than as an ideological focus. In particular, one might well ask whether the peasant ethic of "injustice" would not have given rise to a transformation of the symbolic system, from which crystallized the unique Israelite ideology based on social contract. In southeast Asia, for example, the repression of the peasant economic values found outlet in a behavioral pattern that can be traced in the cultural system—in folk songs and new religious beliefs and practices (Scott 1976: 232-40). In France, economic frustration and depression was partly channeled into deep pyschological neuroses and disturbances that ultimately found expression in Witches' Sabbaths and the like (Le Roy Ladurie 1974: 203-10).

If the detailed investigation of local social groups and their ecological relationships provides a starting point for discerning what lay beneath the monarchy, then clearly the ideological contribution to political bonds within the state would also demand further scrutiny. What factors, for instance, determined the legitimacy of the Israelite crown, and what centripetal and centrifugal forces were factors in the unification of ancient Israel? is there more than a superficial resemblance between the transferrence of the emirate from the Maᶜn to the Shihab line and the resulting problems of legitimization on the one hand, and the transferrence of Israelite kingship to the Davidic line, the repeated subsequent rebellions, and the breakup of the United Monarchy after Solomon on the other, bare decades after the unification of both polities? Fundamental to this problem, I believe, is the question of whether social disparities within the state were channeled through ideological idioms into political action, and the related question of how the role of the court and its actors measured up to the ideal social order perceived outside the court.

This, in turn, raises the question of whether conversion, or any other form of sociocultural syncretism, either between highlanders and lowlanders or between northerners and southerners, was an implicit mechanism for reinforcing social cohesiveness and enhancing survival for groups incorporated into the state. Were, for instance, the Druze-Maronite, Qaysite-Yemenite, and Yazbaki-Janbalat divisions characteristic of more basic regional differences that may similarly have underlain the political rift that emerged between Judah and Israel? Certainly, the continuous erosion of the state ideology in Solomonic and later times appears to be symptomatic of the cultural flexibility and social elasticity that makes syncretism possible. In the period of the United Monarchy, too, at the time when the state was still in its infancy, David's ritual before the Ark, the movement of the capital to Jerusalem, Solomon's construction of the temple, and numerous acts all have been recognized as conscious symbolic actions that were intended to some extent to affirm the social order and the role of the king in that order, as well as to bind diverse groups to the national ideology. My point here is not that the administrative institutions of the Israelite monarchy were not pervasive integrative forces, but that a focus on these institutions tends to mask both the underlying parochial interests and the

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ideological ties that may have served to overcome them. And ultimately, since it is the theory and practice of the Israelite ideology that is the most prominent feature of the monarchy, a failure to understand these ties would in essence be a failure to understand the monarchy itself, and perhaps the reason why, in the long run, the monarchy fell.

The Republic of Lebanon

What is applicable to sociopolitical origins is also applicable to present day developments, whether we consider the Islamic republic in Iran, the Jewish state in Palestine, or center and periphery secularism in Turkey. Broad continuities, for instance, emerge from the reality behind the national myth of a centralized state in 18th-century Lebanon to the modern day Lebanese republic—in the relationships between local social groups, in sociocultural patterns, and in the political ties that bind these groups to the elite. To be sure, many changes have occurred since the 19th century, not the least of which are greater demographic intermingling, new commercial linkages, new political ideologies (in the modern sense), and new economic niches on a more homogeneous physical landscape. But despite these changes, the political elite of Lebanon, the *zuʿama* (Hottinger 1966; Dekmejian 1975; Gubser 1973; Early 1973), are still overwhelmingly concerned with competing for one of Eisenstadt's (1963) "free-floating resources," the support of the local primordial groups. These units, despite the broadening of economic niches, are still characterized by a great deal of mobility that cross-cuts the interfaces defined by sectarian affiliations or economic interests. The most successful political leader in this situation is the one who can bridge the most social networks. The long-lasting relationships involving family groups and branches of families, *hazazah*, still attest moreover to the vitality and cohesiveness of the local groups. And these contrast with the ephemeral bonds of *hizbiyyah*, which aligns these units into larger coalitions and factions and, through the identification of the *zaʿim* with various ideological positions or patron-client relationships, can be channeled by these leaders into allegiances (Khuri 1975: 195-97). In short, the multiple lines of cleavage between groups—what we call pluralism today—have existed for a long time and have set the pattern for the ways in which a leader can mobilize his supporters.

But the very theme of change and dynamic disequilibrium stressed earlier should suggest that these continuities are not to be overly stressed. Changes in political organization, particularly the ways a leader can mobilize his following, have of course taken place during the long interval prior to the modern era, particularly in the area of political choices. The political choices available to an individual in preindustrial southern Syria seem to have been governed more by security than by gain or prestige; and since the primary base of political power was less in landholding than in human resources, the traditional peasant may have had sufficient freedom of choice and movement to align himself with any of a wide spectrum of local leaders. On the other hand, in modern Lebanese politics the ability of an individual to shift allegiances from one political leader to another is more constrained by class and social status and thus is limited to a narrow range of political blocs which, defined in part by ideological terms, have combined local groups into a pyramiding structure of social networks. While the spectrum of socio-economic niches has broadened in recent centuries, the reach of the political elite has, by bridging a multitude of social networds, also widened. Thus, for all the free-floating, shifting nature of balanced political blocs today, the integrative transformation has channeled the choices of an individual into a restricted range of outcomes. In this sense, at least, the present is not entirely a prisoner of the past.

Conclusions

Near Eastern archaeologists have tended to argue from individual sites to culture areas, or from assemblages to peoples. Historians, who deal with urban-oriented texts, have identified "ethnic" groups through personal and group names and social heirarchies through titles, class designations, and legal or economic transactions. These approaches, when combined, have led to the reconstruction of ancient societies as large, amorphous units of "peoples" who are racially or linguistically defined and who occupy a diffuse culture area. Within their culture areas, these societies are thought to form a mosaic of well-defined territorial polities which, with the exception of the various nomadic groups on their borders, are hierarchically organized into a social pyramid with designated leaders and social classes, each with specifically outlined social functions. Consequently, cultural change is generally perceived to be uniform throughout a culture area, punctuated by specific events which are often thought to be the causes of change. These reconstructions are necessary and perhaps not altogether inaccurate, but they are

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static models which tend to color our perceptions of the past, and should be recognized as such. The very nature of such models creates paradoxes like "Oriental Despotims" on the steppe or "Byzantium in a five hectare city" when it comes to explaining change, for a static system cannot explain change without resorting to major, *external* events as causative factors.

I would not deny that my own perceptions have in many ways been colored in the same manner; but my argument is that culture change should not be seen so much in terms of "breaks" and "continuities" as in shifts in balance between dynamic social systems. Our frame of reference should be not only sites, "peoples," culture areas, or states, but local, small-scale social groups. To be sure, I have succeeded in delineating "independently defined, specifically outlined" primordial groups only vaguely, focusing more on ecological than on sociocultural patterns, yet such an approach provides at least a beginning for the understanding of these small social units. It is clear the other social units, defined by other criteria—perhaps by urban quarters, by occupational specializations, or by divisions of labor and social relationships—may provide equally promising units of study.

Stated briefly, my central thesis is that change should not be viewed as alternation between phases of static equilibrium, each characterized by a dominant sociopolitical structure, but in terms of sociopolitical organisms composed of small units, which are continually changing and which are tied politically by a variety of elastic sociocultural bonds. By separating these local units, which are bound by specific sociocultural patterns, from the centralizing ambitions of the elite, who seek to redirect these patterns into politicized ties that would bind these units to the state social order, we can begin to disentangle sociocultural patterns.

Toward this end I have tried to trace the basis for sociopolitical organization in a region through crucial isolated transformations in its developmental history: the coalescence of smaller social groups into larger political units. It should be underscored that my aim has not been to show that ecological changes (in this case, deforestation) were in any way determinants of sociopolitical change, but to view them as a set of factors that allowed a greater range of small local group adaptations, some of which because of their more stabilized economies and sociocultural patterns were more susceptible to the centralizing tendencies of the elites. These centralizing tendencies, at least in southern Syria, would appear to have been less in the administrative, coercive, or economic sphere than is commonly construed, and more perhaps in the ideological sphere. The state, in fact, was only able to maintain itself, and precariously so, when ecological conditions permitted a more immobile system of fixed relationships between local groups. In this sense, the subsistence economy acted more as a centrifugal force that was more efficient at the local level than when controlled by the state.

I have suggested that one significant means of mobilizing diverse human resources and tying them to the state lay in the channeling of sociocultural patterns into ideological bonds. Throughout this essay, I have hinted sporadically at the ways in which this may have been accomplished. For the Bronze Age cities, it may have lain in the maintenance of the perceived social order through ceremonial displays embedded in the central symbolic role of the palace-temple organization. For the Lebanese emirate, it lay more in the parapolitical ties that were, at least in practise, sanctioned by the Druze conception of the feudal order, the Maronite ideology, and the Shiᶜite moral framework that was symbolized by the Passion Play and maintained the Learned Families. For the Ituraean principality, it probably lay in the tetrarch's position as the high priest of the Heliopolitan triad at the cult center in Baalbek. And for the Israelite monarchy, the maintenance of this order lay in the precepts of the Covenant and the legitimacy of the anointed king.

In conclusion, then, the sort of research strategies that I would suggest for Near Eastern archaeology would put greater emphasis on a more rigorous approach to intrasite and intersite variability (a far cry indeed from the basic premise of a "type" site!) and on regional surveys, both of which would promote a greater sensitivity to small-scale, open-boundary systems. As for more strictly historical research, the interpretation of texts—the continuous interaction between the historian and his "facts"—must more fully appreciate the spatial and temporal depth of events, the complex interweaving of factors in any historical process, and the broad range of cultural systems that sets standards of cognitive behavior and shapes seemingly irrational motives and actions so remote from our own.

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NOTES

An earlier version of this manuscript was read by R. M. Adams, L. E. Stager, M. B. Rowton, and M. Gibson and was presented as a seminar paper at the San Francisco SBL Meeting in December 1977. The same subject in a slightly different format was presented in a lecture in the Department of Anthropology at Princeton University. I wish to thank the readers and participants at the seminar and lecture, as well as the Editor of BASOR, Prof. William G. Dever, for their comments and suggestions. I am, of course, fully responsible for the contents herein.

[1]The following discussion of the regional ecology of the Biqa^c is based in part on my own fieldwork (Marfoe 1978) and on information contained in the sources (mostly mimeographed government and FAO reports) cited there.

[2]Calculated from statistics provided in Gauthier and Baz 1960: II, 133-37, an unpublished report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon.

[3]Roughly 90% of the farmers in the northern Biqa^c earned an average income of 2500 LL (IRFED 1959-60: 11-7-2), while Chatty (1975) points out that the average income of the bedouin families was around 7100 LL roughly ten years later.

[4]The Biqa^c survey project, on which the following is largely based, was undertaken between 1972 and 1975 under the auspices of the German Saarbrücken expedition to Kamid el-Loz, in cooperation with the British expedition to Tell Nebi Mend. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the directors of these two projects, Professor Rolf Hachmann and Mr. Peter J. Parr, as well as to Messrs. Emir Maurice Chehab and Roger Saidah for their cooperation and permission to do the survey. My own work was funded by grants from the German Academic Exchange Service, the American Schools of Oriental Research (through the W. F. Albright Fellowship), and the University of Chicago. The results are discussed more fully in Marfoe 1978.

[5]The growth phases take place during EB II-III, MB II, LB II, and Iron I. The decline phases occur in EB IV, LB I, the LB II-Iron I transition, and the Iron II-Persian period.

[6]Based on rough estimates of total settled area of ca. 165 hectares in EB II-III, ca. 140 hectares in MB II, and ca. 100 hectares in LB II. There may be a comparable decrease in settlement in Palestine and Transjordan of ca. 29% between EB and MB and 47% between MB and LB (in numbers of sites), *if* the survey data (i.e., Kochavi 1972; Campbell 1968; Mittmann 1970; Sapin 1968-69; Ibrahim, Sauer, and Yassine 1973; Thompson 1975) from the sample regions are considered to be uniform in reliability.

[7]This figure coincides with the estimates derived by Alt 1967: 192 for Late Bronze Palestine on the basis of the Egyptian lists.

[8]My population estimates are based on a mean of 200 persons per hectare on large sites, and 125 persons per hectare on small sites. Thus, for four sample clusters of sites, the ratios obtained for small sites to large sites are 2:1 (Kamid el-Loz), 2:1 (Tell Sirhan), 3:2 (Tell Hashbe), and 1:1 (Tell el-Ayyun). While the actual figures may be debatable, the ratios should not be too far off the mark.

[9]For the four sample clusters of sites noted above, there are either six or five satellite villages to a center, but these satellites do not fall into a well-defined hierarchy of settlement sizes or a rigid spatial pattern (Marfoe 1978: 231-39; 401-4).

[10]Among the vast literature that already exists, the syntheses in Greenberg 1955, Kupper 1957, Bottéro 1954, Rowton 1965 and 1967, and Giveon 1971 are still authoritative. The *Ḫabbatu* appear alongside the *SA.GAZ* and *Sutu* in *EA* 318.

[11]Other documents include KL 69: 279 in Edzard et al. 1970, Papyrus Anastasi I 19, 1-4 in Gardiner 1911, and PRU IV 17.238. For a general survey of the Amarna period in southern Syria and Palestine, see Campbell 1960, and Albright 1975. For a discussion of the textual sources pertaining to the Biqa^c, see Marfoe 1978: 493-531.

[12]For the identification of Kamid el-Loz with Kumidi, see a summation of the general arguments in Hachmann 1970.

[13]The size of the military forces mentioned in the Amarna letters has already been noted by Campbell 1960: 74 and Albright 1975: 108. For a discussion of the numbers of prisoners in the Egyptian campaign lists, which generally run in the hundreds, see Marfoe 1978: 543-45, 553-54.

[14]*EA* 185 does not make it clear whether the five sites attacked by the *SA.GAZ* are subsidiary to Ḫazi or not. However, if they are located within the vicinity of Ḫazi/Tell Hizzine, as I assume, then they are most probably small village settlements.

[15]The number of *maryannu* are usually less than 50, and with the Syrian princes and their dependents captured, the total is usually less than 100. My percentage is in rough accord with Liverani 1975. For further discussion, see references cited in n. 13.

[16]For a preliminary discussion of the Kamid el-Loz palace see Kuschke and Metzger 1972. For the domestic quarters see Marfoe 1978: 296-316.

[17]Through an informal communication I have learned that a "treasure hoard" was recovered during the 1978 season in the palace-temple complex.

[18]For brief discussions of the role of kingship and the symbolic representation of the natural order in Bronze Age Syria, see Gray 1952, 1957, Pettinato and Matthiae 1976, Marfoe 1978: 549-57.

[19]Apart from the well-known references to the ^{c}Apiru, it is evident from Giveon's (1971) study that the Shasu are only rarely mentioned in the 18th Dynasty but then appear with increasing frequency in the 19th Dynasty.

[20]This and the next three paragraphs are based on the following sources: Alouf 1925, Heyd 1960, Holt 1966, Lewis 1966, Ma^{c}oz 1968, Rafeq 1966, Salibi and Hours 1968, and Shaw 1976.

[21]This and the next paragraph are based on Elisseeff 1967, Stevenson 1958, Ashtor 1976, Lapidus 1967, and Gaudefroy-Demombynes 1923, in addition to the sources cited in the text.

[22]Apart from my own work, the following sources on highland agriculture were consulted: Lewis 1953, Issawi 1973, Gauthier and Baz 1960, de Vaumas 1954, Thoumin 1936, Sanlanville 1963, Klaer 1962, Smilianskaya 1966, E. Peters 1963, Fevret 1950, and Touma 1958.

[23]The archaeological estimates for settled area are only about double the EB estimated area of 165 hectares, however: 312 hectares in the Roman period, and 350 hectares in the early Mamluk period. Considering the greater degree of urban agglomeration in these later periods and the clues provided by textual records, the estimated population probably exceeded

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the EB population by a ratio of 3:1. In the following account of population densities, I have preferred to use ratios of density rather than absolute figures to avoid misleading the reader as to the accuracy of my estimates.

[24]Basic references on the Ituraeans include Schürer 1891, Jones 1931, 1971, Rey-Coquais 1967, and Jidedjian 1975, in addition to the sources cited in the text.

[25]Apart from the references to Strabo and Quintus Aemilius cited earlier, the references come from Josephus, *Ant.* 13.15.2, 16; 14.3.2; 15.10.1.

[26]This section on the Lebanese emirate is based on: Alouf 1925, Chevallier 1971, Harik 1966, 1968, Holt 1966, Poliak 1939, Polk 1963, Rafeq 1966, Salibi 1959, 1965, as well as my own work and sources cited in the text.

[27]For a general discussion of settlement patterns, see Thoumin 1936: 275-92.

[28]This is reminiscent of Murra's (1972) "vertical control" model for Peru during the Inca period.

[29]This and the following paragraph are based on Chevallier 1971: chap. 3; Harik 1968: chaps. 3, 4; Polk 1963: chap. 4; Touma 1972: I, chaps. 1-3; II, chaps. 23-25.

[30]See also Chevallier 1971: 39-63.

[31]The population in the mountains is based on Chevallier 1971: 42, and the arable land per capita is based on a cultivated area of ca. 80,000 hectares. The Biqa^c population figure is based on my own estimates from archaeological and historical data (Marfoe 1978: 765, 777).

[32]This demographic movement closely resembles another South American phenomenon, the colonization of frontier coastal lands from the highlands in Ecuador (Casagrande, Thompson, and Young 1964).

[33]The figures on the chart are derived from Braidwood 1937, Ibrahim, Sauer, and Yassine 1973, Kochavi 1972, Campbell 1968, Sapin 1968-69, and my own Biqa^c data (Marfoe 1978: 793-94).

[34]For a general treatment of the principal Israelite cities, see Kenyon 1971—although some of her interpretations should be viewed with caution.

[35]Mendenhall's model is based primarily on such studies of peasant rebellions as Wolf 1966 and Hobsbawm 1959, which in turn are based on peasant groups that, I believe, are more tied to the land than in the Near East.

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Editor's Note. The published text of this article deviates in some respects from the author's manuscript. Due to the fact that the author was out of the country during the editing and proofing stage of this issue, corrections could not be made prior to publication. In general, the author agrees that the various changes do not alter significantly the arguments or details that the article presents. Occasionally, however, the cumulative result of these changes inadvertently do alter the emphasis, meaning, and logical sense of certain passages. Some technical terms also have been changed. For these reasons, we append a list of author's corrections on p. 84.

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Corrections for L. Marfoe, "The Integrative Transformation: Patterns of Sociopolitical Organization in Southern Syria," pp. 1-42.

P./Line/Col.	
3/30/L	"and *which* must" ("undercurrents" not "higher levels" are measured in millennia)
3/49/L	delete "thus" (does not follow logically the preceding paragraph)
5/7/R	"and *inopportune* seasonal fluctuations" (they occur at the wrong time of year)
5/15/L	"*In the perception of farmers, if not in reality*, the village lands" (how the villagers think of it, not necessarily how it actually is)
5/6/R	"with dry farming, *fallow is necessary*, and yields fluctuate" (not "yields fluctuate . . . due to . . . fallow")
7/28/R	delete "increasingly" (pastoralism is not necessarily on the rise; some villages rely upon it more than others)
8/7/R	"usually *been in a precarious economic stability*" (prone towards instability; not necessarily unstable)
8/26/R	"observed of such *model social types*" (Leach's terms)
9/13/R	"and *the occurrence of taqiyya among* the Shiᶜite"
9/30/R	"*Along with* the overwhelming" (cash crops and emigration are not outcomes of dryfarming)
9/39/R	"towns, *and with the greater availability of natural pasture and the need for manure on fallow land*, the role of pastoralism" (additional factors suggesting prevalence of pastoralism)
10/42/R	"*or have conjured* up images" (2nd clause does not depend on 1st clause of sentence)
12/40/R	"reduction in settle *surface area*, in" (regions are not abandoned)
14/42/L	"extensive, *since* the microenvironments" (2nd clause supports 1st clause)
16/18/L	"*Furthermore*, the mercenary character" (not an example of foregoing)
16/40/R	"a network of personal, *politicized* ties" (not two separate ties; personal ties used for political ends)
17, bottom	passage deleted Suggests that proximity of temple remains to palace remains, mythological texts (e.g., Ugarit), and evidence of rituals support the contention that the practice and theory of kingship were not divorced, and that the ideological contribution to political integration was at least as great as the administrative contribution.
18/13/L	"maintenance of the state *ideal* was" (suggesting that the legitimacy of the state rather than the state structure was being eroded)
28/33/R	"these *sectarian enclaves and* feudal hierarchies" (some groups are not "feudal")
29/14/L	"the aspirations of the emirate *was not the same as* its grasp, *to distinguish what this grasp was*, and *why it* eventually" (aspirations merely different from grasp; following paragraphs as to elucidate the nature of this grasp, and the causes of its failure)
29/43/R	"ties *both linked and* aligned" (contradictory ties)
29/bottom/R	passage deleted Explains why sectarian and feudal ties were insufficient (and hence why parapolitical ties were necessary to control shifting alliances)
30/39/R	"ancient societies, *in which the separation of the centralizing authority from the social groups around and beneath it allows us*" (approach mentioned in next paragraph refers in part to this)
35/23/L	"clear *that* other social" (small social units in general)
35/39/R	"and on a greater sensitivity to small-scale, open-boundary systems in regional surveys, on not just a catalog of sites but on what is happening there." ("sensitivity" refers to surveys)

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